

## **Metal Hearts**

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/16612733) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/16612733>.

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### **Category:**

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### **Fandom:**

[Homestuck](#), [Hiveswap](#)

### **Relationship:**

[Auto-Responder | Lil Hal & Davesprite](#), [Auto-Responder | Lil Hal & Lil Sebastian](#), [Auto-Responder | Lil Hal/Dave's Bro](#), [Dirk Lalonde](#),  
[Davesprite & Lil Sebastian](#), [Dave Lalonde & Lil Sebastian](#), [Auto-Responder | Lil Hal & Mallek Adalov](#)

### **Character:**

[Auto-Responder | Lil Hal](#), [Lil Sebastian \(Homestuck\)](#), [Davesprite](#), [Dave Lalonde](#), [Dirk Lalonde](#), [Rose Lalonde](#), [Roxy Lalonde](#), [John Crocker](#), [Jane Crocker](#), [Dad Crocker](#), [Jade Crocker](#), [Jake Crocker](#), [Mallek Adalov](#),  
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[Humanstuck](#), [Android/Cyborg Lil Hal](#), [Android/Cyborg Lil Sebastian](#),  
[Android/Cyborg Davesprite](#), [Somewhat](#), [Lalonde Family - Freeform](#),  
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**Language:**

English

**Series:**

Part 2 of [Former Strider Sprites](#)

**Stats:**

Published: 2018-11-29 Updated: 2019-11-11 Chapters: 4/? Words: 22154

# Metal Hearts

by [09Pyros](#) [09Hydros](#)

## Summary

Your name is Dirk Lalonde, you are the head robotics engineer of Crocker Laboratories of the mighty Crocker Corporation. You are friends with it's heiress and a loving, respected big brother to three other siblings. You have just met the most infuriating man you have ever known, he looks almost just like you.

You decided you want him.

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Your name is Hal Strider, you used to be shades but now you are half-organic and in a new world with your new 'brothers' who are in the same situation as you. Striders do not exist in this world, this changes with you and your brothers. You have just met the Dirk of this world, he looks the same but he's entirely different.

You decided you hate him.

## Notes

Yeah I have no idea where this came from. Well, lie, I think I know where this came from but it's vague. I just want more fics with Hal, Davesprite and Lil Seb! It's definitely different from Stubborn Flocks since no Dave is dead.

Let's get this clear;

This is an AU where Striders do not exist, not until Hal, Davesprite and Seb come in. Dave and Dirk are Lalondes, Jake and Jade are Crockers. Crockercorp is kind of the same as in it's a big empire and Jane is still the heiress but we'll go more into that later in the story.

And yes, there is no Harley or English families other than Lord English himself, is he in the story?... Maybe.

The end goal is Dirk/Hal, they are not related obviously so no need to get your trousers in a twist.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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-- tipsyGnostalgic [TG] began bothering timeausTestified [TT] at 02:34 AM  
--

TG: diiiiirk

TG: diiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiirk

TG: dirky

TG: dicky

TG: \*dirky

TG: either works but srsly answer me pls

TG: dirk srsly

TG: dammit dirk i know ur not asleep its lik only 2 am

TT: What is it.

TG: finally

TG: so you know how circuit came out of literally nowhere about two years ago and hacked crockercorp and is keeps fucking with us and crockercorp wants to catch him and recruit him but cant find him

TT: Yeah.

TG: i found him

TT:

TG: u jelly ;333

TT: Where is he.

TG: well technically i only \*think\* i found him

TG: u know how hard he is to track

TG: guys a fuckin genius

TG: i dunno bout his vendetta for crockercorp but hey hes def p cool

TG: i mean just look at dat hoverboard he made

TG: u def jelly for that arent u dirky ;33

TG: wonk

TT: Roxy, where is he.

TG: i make no promises but i think i found him in the slums of derse??

TG: i followed his last track from defacing the crockercorp building in battlefield, i noticed the loop in some of the cameras after jakey n u lost him around prospit so i looked into it annnd

TG: i found where he was goin

TG: he was heading for derse so thats p much where i think he is

TG: or where hes been

TT: The slums of Derse.

TT: Are you serious?

TG: ikr

TG: but u gotta admit u wouldnt expect to find them there

TT: I'll take Jake and check it out

TG: u do that

TG: or u can go to him now

TG: hes at prospit rn messin with ur robots

TT: He's **\*\*WHAT\*\***

-- tipsyGnostalgic [TG] sent file **Camera12.Prospit.Headquarters** --

TG: live from prospit headquarters!

TT: Godddamit!

-- timeausTestified [TT] is idle --

TG: go get him tiger  
TG: ;]

---

-- technologicalFlier [TF] started pestering automaticRecreator [AR] at 3:14 AM --

TF: hal it is goddamn 3 in the morning  
TF: wtf are you doing

AR: Things.

TF: goddammit hal i know you dont like betty crocker and whatever but you know this isnt really the same as the betty crocker you know

AR: Indeed however I find it entertaining in messing with this admittedly impressive version of Crocker Corporations.

AR: This world is very technologically impressive however there could be a lot more improvements.

TF: then tell that to them instead of messing with them

AR: I thought we agreed we would rather avoid contact with them?

TF: then what the fuck are you doing you idiot

AR: I take offense to that brother, your jab at my intellect is clearly unjustified.

TF: unjustified my ass

TF: you just fucking like messing with dirk dont you

AR: I will not verify that reply.

TF: uggh just come back safe

TF: also fix my goddamn equipment will you

AR: Again?

AR: How are you breaking your things so much this month.

TF: shut up im trying to find a new place ever since crocker corp revitalized the old zone i went to

AR: You see? I'm doing good work here.

TF: just get home safely

TF: lil seb is worrying for you

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (\*^\*)

AR: Cheap move, using Lil Seb against me.

AR: I finished anyway.

AR: Oh look, Dirk and Jake have appeared.

AR: Wish me luck and safe travels Qrow.

-- automaticRecreator [AR] ceased pestering technologicalFlier [TF] at 3:18 AM --

TF: dammit hal one day you're going to get all of us in trouble i swear

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (='.')

TF: you shush seb and help him get away

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (^\_^)b

TF: good

---

You grin from behind your metallic mask, despite the fact it covered most of your face and that there were no visible eyeholes for the mask and the fact it the area around you was dark, you could see your surroundings just fine along with some other things. You had built the technological mask from scratch, like most of your other devices that you had on you, it could



have been better if you had more materials but you did your absolute best and made do with whatever you got your hands on.

And by god did you make the absolute best, or at least it was better enough to trump the CrockerCorp tech that made up for almost half of the main tech of this universe.

Yes, this universe.

You have no idea what happened, but you were fairly sure the last time you had been in another universe was in the game of SBURB, fused with some alien troll guy that had an obscene obsession with horses, probably even more than Dirk, and that was saying something.

Speaking of Dirk, or at least *a* version of Dirk, you smirk as you see two figures on colored hoverbikes approaching you at a fast past, followed by a small flock of red security orbs. You salute them and dive off of the ledge you were previously occupying, leaving behind a mess of wires, panels, and other junk you scavenged from the security drone that you managed to ambush and dismantle, not to mention the desecration of a certain corporation's logo.

If there's anything that you share with your brothers, is the thrill of action- *especially* when it came to falling. Qrow was an avid fan of flying, and racing, Sebastian loved to parkour, and you? You simply liked giving a fruitless chase.

As expected they dive after you, a familiar brunet shouting after you like always and an equally familiar blonde was just trying to catch him before you either got away or go splat on the ground, and of course you couldn't let the latter happen so soon enough you're pulling your personal hoverboard from your sylladex and *shred it* against the red building you were previously on.

The board automatically latches on to your boots as it is designed to, the controls and status of the board connecting to your mask and showing information in your sight, you tilt the center of your gravity, the board

tilting with you and its internal and aerodynamic system activating and giving thrust as the electronic coils whirred silently underneath your feet.

There would be no Strider pancake today *thank you very much*.

You focus forward, though there is a live video feed of what's going on behind you with the camera that's stitched into the back of your hood, you dodge the incoming red security bot by leaning left, leaning a sharp right when another comes after you. The wind beats against you and you *feel so alive*. Two years of freedom as a humanoid partial-organism does wonders for your mental state, regardless at the fact your mental capacity is no longer what it used to be, but you have adapted and you are still far superior in terms of certain aspects compared to others.

In your appreciation of your current living status, the two riders have caught up to you, flanking both your sides in an attempt to trap you.

On your left is JAKE CROCKER. Younger brother to the heiress of CrockerCorp JANE CROCKER, both elder siblings to JADE and JOHN CROCKER. Obviously he's different from Jake English but similar enough that you don't really find it surprising, or at least not anymore. There were no Egberts or Harleys or English in this universe, not the ones that they knew, just Crockers. But at least they acted somewhat the same.

On your right is DIRK LALONDE. Older brother to one ROXY LALONDE who was head of the programming department in CrockerCorp, both elder siblings to ROSE and DAVE LALONDE. An alternate version of your original self, could you call him a splinter? He was Dirk but he wasn't a Strider, not in this world, a Strider was what you and your brothers were. Now this was more of a surprise to you and Qrow, how both your original selves were Lalondes and not Striders, they didn't even act like Striders, not really, they were full time Lalondes.

"Give it up Circuit! You're surrounded!" Jake yells at you from your left, truth to his words, the security drones were circling them and you. Dirk was probably coordinating them with that helmet he wore, it probably worked similarly like your mask- which meant you, yourself could connect to them if you wanted to. You're tempted to do so, check on Roxy's new firewalls,

the last time had been harder to hack into which was good for her, she had come a good ways from when you started this mess. Learning new ways in learning on keeping you out of her systems and the corporate's systems, good for her.

As tempting as it was, you decided, no, that could be for next time. You make a show of raising your hands above your head but suspiciously you don't slow down at all in surrender, instead your board suddenly thrusts up as instructed and you're grabbing into a thin but strong iron pipe that was connecting two buildings. The familiar burn of your gloves is welcoming as you change your direction skyward, the video feed shows Dirk and Jake trying to follow after you but you're already above the other buildings and changing directions.

The city is beautiful from above, even with the fact it was extremely early in the morning it is still bustling in business and slight restlessness. Or at least at this part of the city it is, the slums are no doubt semi-quiet and you look forward to that quietness after a successful night of messing and scavenging parts from CrockerCorp. What can you say? They had good parts, and you've taken a shining in swiping a few needed pieces from them. Of course you were careful in making sure to take the ones they didn't seriously need, you were a thief and a hacker, not a careless and senseless criminal, though the company and a few others may contradict your words.

You're broken out of your musings by an incoming barrage of fast security drones coming your way, with the freedom of the skies you are able to accelerate your speed to avoid them.

Both Dirk and Jake have finally gotten to your altitude of travel, but they're lagging behind from the fact you duped them as well as the fact you're speeding away from them, you ponder if Dirk tweaked the bikes again to keep up with you again.

**VVVVVVRRRR**

Your ponderings are answered, and the apparent answer to them is yes. Yes he did tweak the bikes to keep up with you again.

Adorable.

And look, they're taking out their net-guns. Twice as adorable. You'd think after two years, they'd use something else other than the net guns- well they have, but each attempt always ended in a failure, you'll admit there were some close calls but you were always able to escape and make it home without much of a problem.

Except for... that one time.

You tuck your body against the board to dodge the shot coming from the net guns, interesting devices, specifically they were made to catch *you* in the beginning but they've made their way into various other hands other than Dirk and Jake. Each shot was actually an electric net, or rather a net made by hard-light electricity that was harmless but they could have it shock whoever was caught into it if they wanted to, it would wrap a net of whatever it hit and connect the gun to the net, it was a great catching device- the police were even using them ever since CrockerCorp released it to them.

You shouldn't be overcome by memories as you're being chased by two of your former acquaintances, not that they'd know it of course.

Thanks to the camera on your back, you can dodge the incoming shots from Dirk and Jake while keeping an eye on your front.

You pull up a map of the area you're above and dodge another barrage of net-shots before suddenly taking a dive, riding down the side of the building that was beneath you, the map shows you all of the area, even the hidden paths that you'll obviously take advantage of. Sebastian is such an awesome little brother, taking such care to make such a detailed map for you, he is the best little brother. It is him.

You pull the board just in time to avoid going splat against the ground and effectively zoom into the thin alley, Dirk and Jake can't exactly follow you without risking some damage to their hoverbikes with how cluttered the alley is but they *can* send their drones after you which is exactly what they do. It's understandably harder to dodge the net shots in such a thin space but

you make do by blocking their shots with whatever was in your way, throwing small garbage bins into their line of sight and get caught in nets.

Seeing the checkpoint on your map, you grin and take an orb from your sylladex and throw it behind you, letting it be caught in one of the nets and wait approximately forty-five seconds before setting it off, the EMP orb pulses once, twice, thrice- and down goes the drones, your own board was protected from the EMP blast radius. It's an oldie but a goodie, though you are glad you grabbed one of your stronger EMPD orbs, any weaker and it probably wouldn't have worked on the drones.

You slow down, skidding to a stop as you see the checkpoint; it's a manhole, already open from your brother's escapades and planning.

AR: Good job on the map Seb.

AR: I knew I could count on you.

RA: (=^\_ ^=)

You grin and go down proverbial rabbit hole, closing the manhole as you do so.

The stench of the sewers don't bother you from behind the mask, getting back on your board, you follow the map that will lead you home, avoiding the sewer-drones as you do so.

Your name is HAL STRIDER, you were once a brain imprint replica A.I. to one DIRK STRIDER, a pair of shades, a sprite that was merged with an alien troll, and now you are an ANDROID stuck in another dimension along with two other androids who you have dubbed as your brothers.

And right now, you have done a successful scavenge and vandalism trip as well as successfully escape from DIRK LALONDE and JAKE CROCKER.

You are very proud of yourself.

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You are not so proud of yourself.

"Dammit he got away again." Jake curses from beside you, the drones coming back online and reconnecting to both yours and Jake's helmets after being disrupted forcefully but thankfully temporarily offline by Circuit's EMP Disrupter Orb, you hated those things. You sigh, Jake mirrors it and you both take off your helmets to breath in the fresh air of the early morning. The sun slowly rises over the horizon.

Your name is DIRK LALONDE, you are 21 years old and you are the head robotics engineer of the esteemed Crocker Corporation. You have three other siblings, your twin younger sister ROXY LALONDE and your younger siblings by six years, ROSE and DAVE LALONDE. Besides you is your best friend and ex-crush JAKE CROCKER.

Currently, you both have failed *another* capture attempt on the ever elusive hacker slash thief, CIRCUIT. He came out of nowhere two years ago, when you were a fresh age of 19. He started hacking into Crocker Corporation files, bank accounts and more, it had been a slow process at first but as the year went by, it escalated and suddenly the hacker had turned into a thief by the end of YEAR ONE.

He started stealing parts from CrockerCorp owned facilities and products, as well as attacking drones and other robots made by Crocker Corp, harvesting their parts for whatever odd reason, or even just to tweak them or break them. Circuit had been a thorn in Corcker Corp's side for years, though as much as a thorn as he was, he was also very impressive.

Being able to create his signature tools and a few other items that you have seen and also personally took apart, well, some of the items. Like the EMP Disrupter Orb that Circuit usually uses when he's surrounded by drones, it was an old trick but you were sure you had properly fit the drones so they could resist the electro-magnetic pulse that the orb would emit to fry their systems! You have checked and tested it time and time again and yet he still keeps managing to do just that!

And the, begrudgingly, amazing part, was that his own tools seem to be unaffected by the Orb. His hoverboard could still move despite the pulse,

seemingly able to resist it flawlessly and continue to work perfectly- you will give credit to where it's due and Circuit is certainly *very* skilled. Even more skilled than you though you would never willingly admit that fact.

It all the more makes you want to capture him and lock him up, pick apart his genius of a brain and watch him work personally. It's why you kept going after him even after a year now. Roxy calls it an obsession and she may be right but *goddammit* you wanted to meet Circuit face to face, without that obviously high-tech mask he had on his face and so much more.

Every time you think you have him, he always has one more trick up his sleeve that he *literally* gets from *nowhere*, somehow the bastard had managed to create some sort of pocket dimension, an actual *hammer space*, and uses it regularly. Or at least regularly enough in his raids on Crocker Corp.

Crocker Corp definitely wanted access to that, it would make things so *much easier*. Now if only they could actually catch Circuit.

You smile, it startles Jake since normally you're in a bad mood whenever you lose to Circuit but this time...

You think you have the upper hand now.

"Err, Dirk? Are you alright there?" Jake asks you warily, he's even more wary as you chuckle though it was slightly fair since you were sure there was some dark undertones underneath your chuckle.

You look at the beautiful sunrise and smirk, "I'm just fine Jake, absolutely perfectly fine."

The metropolis city of Skaia is spread around you, its wonder and beauty is clear for you and Jake as you're high above the city. Spires and buildings are raised from the ground up, the roads of earth, sky and water go between the buildings and the air is crisp and cold early in the morning. The sky colors as the sun rises, bathing the city in its lovely morning light and just makes it more beautiful in both your eyes.

Both your glasses ring and immediately you and Jake answer them. It's Roxy and Jane. Roxy appears on a holographic form from your pair of glasses while Jane appears from Jake's pair.

"Dirky."

"Jake."

Jane 'looks' around and sighs, "*Another failure then?*" She states more than asks.

Jake mirrors her sigh with his own, "You know how goshdarned slippery that Circuit fellow is, he got us again with his EMPD Orb."

Roxy's holographic image snorts, giving you a grin that makes you grumble, "*Again? Isn't that like his oldest trick in his book? Dirky, what happened?*" She sings in a teasing tone, as amused as she as you are far from it.

"I swear I made the drones more resistant to his orbs, though unfortunately it seems that I will have to up their resistance again." You grunt, then grin, making not only Jake wary again, but Jane too. "Roxy." You say in a knowing tone, Roxy immediately gets it and mirror your grin, ah, the power of twins- though your grins are unsettling your friends.

That didn't really matter though, right now...

You had a genius hacker to catch.

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Looking around, you frown at the neighborhood around you.

The Derse Slums were the worst slums in Skaia City. Even the Prospit and Battlefield slums weren't as bad as Derse's. No one could really do anything though, not yet. Crocker Corp had a plan but that had to wait for some reason, you weren't really concerned about Derse until you actually came to the slums themselves. Maybe you should bring this up with Jane later on. A lot of buildings seemed abandoned some way and even if they were filled



with people, it was still sketchy to see. Not to mention the sky roads in the Derse slums seem to be dangerously close to malfunctioning telling by the sparks on the metallic pipelines.

"Jake come on. It's around somewhere here." You come back from your thoughts and nod, following Dirk through the shady streets. It was still so very shady and somewhat dark despite the fact it was morning. You and Dirk are on foot, dressed inconspicuously and tried not to bring attention to yourselves, which seemed to be an easy thing to do since no one even glanced at your direction. No one even cared.

Before you could wonder why, the reason presents itself in the form of a green hovercar. It looked new and expensive and definitely stood out from the run down neighborhood, everyone seemed to be afraid of it, deliberately looking away from the green car and ignoring it like it didn't even exist. It couldn't be...

Dirk grabs your hand and tugs you away from the street, hiding in a nearby alleyway as the green car passes you both. "That was close. If everyone's afraid of the car we should avoid it too, come on, Circuit's somewhere this way." Dirk told you before letting go and going off, following the

"Alright, hold your horses Dirk, I'm coming." You huff, following after Dirk towards Circuit's apparent place of residency.

You end up in an almost decent looking apartment complex, it looked old and somewhat in shambles but it was still kind of better to look at than the other buildings you've seen on your way here. Unfortunately, the lead ends there and you and Dirk have no clue on where else to really go. You both don't know Circuit's real identity but this is where Roxy had seen him around more than thrice and that was the strongest lead you had.

You cross your arms and frown, "Now what?" You ask your best friend who's trying to think of a way to find out who and where Circuit was.

"Damnit, where the fuck is he?!"

Instinctively you both turn to the loud and somewhat familiar voice,  
"Huh?"

A man, possibly the same age as Dirk or maybe a bit older, jumps from the second floor stairwell, landing gracefully on the floor right at the side of them on the street- He looked so familiar, orange shades rested on his blonde head or hair, he wore an orange hoodie with a black crow stitched in the middle of his chest, black jeans and orange shoes. The man looked around then snapped his gaze at them, his red orange eyes widening at the sight of them.

He looks so familiar to you, but you can't place a finger wh- "*Dave?*" Dirk blurts out incredulously and the familiarity snaps at the name.

This man looked like an older Dave!

The Dave-look-alike looked very shock as he looked at them then curses underneath his breath.

"Dammit Hal I knew something like this was going to happen."

Who was Hal?

---

## Chapter End Notes

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAnd Done.

Sorry for the long wait for the other chapter stories but I'm trying my best! Also yes, this *is* another story among my other stories but I couldn't help it! I'm sorry but I hope you enjoyed it nonetheless!

# Chapter 2

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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### A Year Ago

You sigh, propping your head against the palm of your right hand. Your fingers tap rhythmically against your cheek, a habit signifying your impatience and boredom. And indeed it was. It was so, *boring*. When you had started this mess- no matter how accidental it had been at first, you were expecting more... *action* than this.

They send robots and grunts after you, both cannot comprehend your cunning and it's almost offensive to you. As fun as it was to watch them continuously fail to come after you and fall for your tricks, they just lack that *oomph* you had when you started this. At first it had been thrilling to get security chasing after you after you stole some parts of their tech. After publicly hacking into their servers and just generally trolling around with them after gaining more and more confidence after each successful trip.

Now? It was just the same old, same old.

It's been exactly a year or so since you, Qrow -formerly Davesprite- and Lil Seb appeared in this odd little universe.

It was a modern day city, well 'modern day' yet very futuristic, there were flying cars, automatic devices, robots- which brought up a special even slash dilemma exclusive to the three only Striders in the city; the three of you were not fully organic. Suffice to say, the three of you were androids.

Androids- well, *cyborgs* if you want to get technical but androids were just so much cooler to say- weren't that common even with the futuristic setting of the city. Robots were common sure but fully humanoid robots weren't that much popular for some reason. People with bionic limbs were accepted

and kind of common but there weren't many humans whose brains were actually computer processors and most of their flesh were some sort of synthetic skin that had *both* wires *and* muscles underneath. Somehow.

You were a mesh of organic and inorganic and it was... unnatural and weird at the start, never mind the fact you used to be a pair of shades, then a sprite mixed with a troll... Which, after the game, Dirk -Dirk *Strider*, not Dirk Lalonde- *finally* got fed up over you as ARquius and separated the two of you, freeing Equius and doing the same to Davepeta after they requested it, without the Equius part with you the Nepeta part of Davepeta didn't really want to stick around.

After that, you don't remember how but you, Qrow -he changed his name as soon as he found out there was another Dave out there but kept the last name since there was no Strider out there which was a travesty-, and Lil Seb, ended up in the new universe. All you remembered before being shoved into a new body with no idea how to properly function, was arguing with Dirk on some personal matters.

It was no funny-type of irony when you found yourself in a body that you had argued for with Dirk before you woke up at the edge of the city with two others. Only, it wasn't purely metallic, you had organic organs, skin, hair- you really were a mesh of flesh and metal. Only it didn't really seem so from the outside. To the outside world you were as normal as any other teenager- minus the fact your eyes were a strange red that most people didn't have.

You had a heart, pumping oil and blood through your bizarre system, you had a stomach though it was half the size of a normal humans. After a scan, you found that your brain was an unholy fusion of living brain bits and a brain-shaped motherboard circuit. Really, you were more machine than human but you were still a living machine. You could eat and drink, just considerably less than a normal human could.

Qrow on the other hand was more human than machine, and yet still a living machine. He could eat the normal portion of a human could but not as much, though that doesn't stop him from shoveling fast food takeout into

his gullet the moment he feels like it. His own brain was a the same mesh but it was noticeably smaller than yours.

Lil' Seb was a perfect combination, and really, perfect in general. The small robotic human-bunny was just too adorable for words, and rarely, he didn't speak if at all, even when they were over Pesterchum, he preferred to just send adorable bunny emoticons and links. His brain for some reason was the perfect fifty-fifty mesh of brain bits and circuit board, which didn't really make sense since he had been a robot bunny but they weren't going to really question it since Lil' Seb was just perfect the way he was.

Anyway, it was a rough start for the three of you since you had no where to go. Qrow had to get used to not having wings and being alone in his head, Lil' Seb had to get used to being bigger than he used to be while you? You had it worse, you had trouble controlling yourself at the start, blindly flailing your uncooperative limbs until you finally took it by the wheel and managed to get to the point of where you were now; master of your own body.

You could fucking do a pirouette if you wanted all on your own, and you could, you had the dexterity and flexibility to do it despite it all. You worked hard to master your body and be able to freely move around on your own basis. Really, it was the best thing since you merged with Equius. Whom you sorely missed but Dirk just had to be a goddamn buzz kill.

Speaking of Dirk... Only it wasn't *your* Dirk.

You blink incredulously from behind your mask at the footage the cameras were giving you, straightening from your hiding place to pay proper attention to the blond man that had entered the scenario.

Dirk Lalonde had entered the building.

A curious glint enters your eyes as you observe this universe's Dirk, who wasn't a Strider- *no* Striders exist, none at all, at least none that were familiar to you and your family, luckily for you and this universe, the three of you were happy to make yourselves comfortable in the universe as the official Striders.

Dirk Lalonde, fresh out of teenhood and into adulthood as a 20 year old. The youngest robotic engineer in Crocker Corp and one of the most smartest men alive. You only know him as much as you read about him from both the public articles and the work articles that you've gotten from Crocker Corporation itself, both singing the guys praises like goddamn sirens of the sea, luring in more and more pirates and sailors whom were the public.

Dirk Lalonde, Bachelor of the Year, Teen-now-Young-Adult Genius, and many more ridiculous but begrudgingly impressive titles wracked underneath his belt.

As his counterpart, he looked exactly like the Dirk you remember, the Dirk that you *both* resembled. He has his chin, his nose, with the exception of your eyes and hair style; your eyes were red, and surprisingly, your hair was a bit less spiky and slightly more curly than you originally liked but you came to enjoy the slight difference, being compared to Dirk was aggravating and as much as you were essentially in a sense *him*, you liked the difference since it meant you were your own person now. ~~But were you really.~~

Except, so was this Dirk. Dirk Lalonde didn't wear ironic pointy triangular aviators, and when he did wear aviators they were always the normal kind, square-ish and didn't wear them all the time. No, instead he sometimes wore sharp-looking glasses, only when he needed to read something small, stare at a screen for long periods of time or was working on something delicate and needed his full entire attention. He and the Dave of this universe revealed their eyes to the world with no care at all.

It was appalling to you and Qrow.

They were exposing the windows of their very *existence* to the whole world-

You take a deep breath, the deep irritation you felt over such a trivial matter ~~it wasn't a trivial matter not to you Striders~~ and focused back on the current situation; Dirk was in the building you were in. And he wasn't there for Corporation business. Not with the way he was dressed nor the sense of

purpose in his stride. You're internally snorting and scoffing at it all, he's not a Strider and yet he strides. Hilarious.

Though, you couldn't help but notice the touch of elegance that came with the stride, a different kind of movement from a Strider's- he's a Lalonde here, not a Strider and it's still so weird to you.

Focus.

You observe the alternate Dirk, he's wearing fashionable dark cargo pants, a dark orange jacket and a black undershirt. His face is both expressionable and stoic and his eyes, they're set, focused and burning with determination. Your hand unconsciously touches the nonexistent eyeholes of your mask, those familiar and unfamiliar orange eyes *burn* even through the screen, even though they aren't *looking at you with hate-*

You smile.

He was here for you.

Of course he was. You had been terrorizing the company he worked for for a full on year now and finally it seemed that he had enough, he wanted to take the reigns and take charge. His way. You had expected it because as much as this Dirk was different from the original ~~from you~~ he was still the same. Still the same Dirk who had to be in charge, to look over what was happening and make sure that there was no problem, and if there was- he would personally deal with it.

Looks like this Dirk wasn't that different from the Dirk you knew when it came to the gist of it.

You're looking forward to this, he was much more interesting than the grunts and robots that Crocker Corp sends after you.

You stand up, standing up from the ledge of the window where you had been sitting on with your elbow on your knees in boredom, waiting for the incoming robots and grunts at first but now you wait for the most interesting obstacle that Crocker Corporation would send after you.

The door opens, the wind howls from the open window behind you as you look at the one who opened the door.

"*Dirk Lalonde...*" You say, monotonous from behind your mask which hides your voice in a synthetic and scrambled sound. "*What an honor.*"

Dirk looks at you, intrigue, resolution and calculation in his intense orange eyes. There is no dispassionate facade on his face, he's showing his emotions and it's clear to you and the world. There is no hidden self-loathing in his body, not one bit, it's all confident and he's looking at you so *intensely*, trying to pick your brain from where he was standing and when he speaks, it's smooth and non-monotonous like *his-yours*- "Circuit." He says, glancing away from you to the bag of important parts and technology by your side.

Without a word, you captchalogued it, hid it safely in your sylladex and you watch with hidden mirth void from your face even from behind the mask as his eyes widen slightly.

Sylladex technology doesn't exist in this universe, no SBURB technology has touched this Earth and there is no SkaiaNet to replicate it. He's even more intrigued, he wants to *know* how you do it, where it goes- you've read the various files about yourself from Crocker Corp. There is great emphasis on your sylladex, there is a starting study about it but they don't know what the fuck a sylladex is, can't even *fathom* or properly *comprehend* it without your help, without Qrow and Seb.

You three held secrets that the world would have loved to know.

But you wouldn't let them know, not until they *earned* the right to know.

How?

By catching you, you decided as you tilt your head at Dirk who tenses at your action.

"... *Would you like to play a game Dirk?*"



The chase is on.

---

### **Present Time**

-- turntechGodhead [TG] began pestering rabbitAutomaton [RA] at 12:34 PM --

TG: yo dude

RA: /)\_/)

RA: (>.>) !

TG: hey

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (^u^)/

TG: haha still up with the rabbit shit huh

RA: =(:P) !

RA: (\\_/)

RA: ^\\_(\ツ)\_/^\

TG: man talking to you is like

TG: frustrating and adorable

TG: how the hell do you type all that shit so fast

TG: after all this time it is still a goddamn fucking mystery to me

RA: (\\_/)

RA: ^\\_(\ツ)\_/^\

RA: =(:?)

TG: im suppose to ask you that

TG: but fine

TG: im doing fine and shit got everything i need and all that

TG: schools been wack but hey thats school

TG: at least i got my best bros

TG: the real best bros not the fake ones that try to get into our shit and stuff  
TG: john and jade are still trying to figure out where you are and rose is trying to stop them but not much youre pretty popular in our group dude

RA: =(;3)  
RA: /\\_/  
RA: (>u>)~?

TG: hahaha  
TG: yeah rose is still jealous that i can understand the crap you send  
TG: still dont know why but thats a thing  
TG: a good thing weird but definitely good  
TG: master rabbit hieroglyphic reader right here  
TG: wby  
TG: hyd

RA: =(XD)  
RA: ...  
RA: (\\_/  
RA: "\\_ ( ' ) \_/  
RA: (\\_/  
RA: (~v~)b

TG: you sure?

RA: (\\_/  
RA: (~v~)b!

TG: and your bros?

RA: (\\_/  
RA: (~7~)b  
RA: Theyre alright

TG: and theres the one time youll ever say in a conversation ever  
TG: like seriously talk about man of a few words  
TG: cant wait to meet you in rl  
TG: things are gonna be hilarious

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (>n>) p

TG: still no?

TG: cmon dude its been like a year

TG: you obv know who i am i should know who you are

TG: as much as johns dad is all 'internet privacy identity protection' i know  
youre a cool dude

TG: i can feel it

TG: and i trust what i feel ya feel?

RA: ...

TG: is it about your bros?

TG: they as protective as johns dad is?

RA: ...

TG: dude

TG: bro

TG: bunny bro

TG: you can trust me

RA: ...

RA: =(:P)

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (~n~)p

RA: !

-- rabbitAutomaton [RA] has sent file ≡(:3).jpeg--

TG:

TG: dude

TG: dude

TG: what the fuck

TG: youre adorable

TG: dude

TG: is that a bunny hoodie

TG: the ears are sticking up wtf

TG: and those shades

TG: totally radical bro

TG: look at that shit

TG: lightings kinda horrible tho

TG: where the hell are you

TG: its all dark

TG: yo is that your bro behind the screen thats giving you the shitty lighting like seriously turn on the lights your eyes are going to go shit

TG: dammit i cant really see your face kind cuz the light is too shitty for me to make you out aside from the glinty dork anime shades and the bunny hoodie you got on and i cant see your bro either

TG: but nice selfie there dude

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (^U^)

TG: mind if i share this with the group?

RA: (\\_/)

RA: (~v~)b

TG: you sure?

TG: were totally going to use this to find you

RA: ...

RA: (\\_/)

RA: ^\\_(\`ヾ)\\_/

TG: you are fucking awesome ra haha

RA: (\\_(\

RA: !(<u<)

TG: aight

TG: later

RA: =(X3)

-- rabbitAutomaton [RA] ceased pestering turntechGodhead [TG] at 1:01 PM --

---

You snort, smiling while leaning back against your chair as you closed Pesterchum.

You never knew why 'RA' preferred Pesterchum over BettyBother. Well, somewhat, you guess you were kind of biased since you used BettyBother longer than Pesterchum.

Pesterchum was a rising rival to BettyBother as a chat client, about one and a half years old and you had to admit, it was a nice chat client but you were a supporter to your friend's family company so BettyBother was your primary way to message people. The only reason you use Pesterchum is to contact and chat with RA, a person- well *boy* as you found out, you met online cruising through a comic website.

It was utterly ridiculous and shitty, and strangely enough you loved it. It was called, *Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff*.

The art was hilariously shitty, so was the humor but it was still goddamn hilarious.

'RA' was a frequent visitor of the comic, leaving behind bunny emoticons instead of actual words, he never talked at all in the comments, committing to just communicate somehow with emoticons, memes and links that were around rabbits and bunnies. He rarely ever spoke in text, and when he did it was short and sweet, getting his point across somehow despite the short sentence.

You grew curious about him and began to talk to him, and somehow, you seemed to just *know* what he meant whenever he typed out an emoticon, though it wasn't as easy at first. He gave you his handle for Pesterchum after a while, you had thought it had been weird, you asked if he had a Bothering handle, which he didn't- he didn't use BettyBother which was really weird and told you about Pesterchum.

Out of curiosity, you made a Pesterchum account, mirroring your Botherhandle. Like you said, it was alright, something you only exclusively used to talk to RA.

You told your other friends about it, Jade, Rose and John had created their own Pesterchum accounts just to talk to RA when they could. You all preferred BettyBother but RA was determined to just stick with Pesterchum- turns out the creator of the chat client was his brother, one of them at least. The other, was the creator of the awesome comic, Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff.

Which was a cool coincidence.

You look at the selfie RA sent you, you finally had a glimpse of who he was. And he was adorable as far as you could tell. The picture was dark, there wasn't much lighting in the room aside from the light of some computer screen that was behind RA, which pretty much gave you a clear form of his silhouette. You couldn't make him out completely, not with how dark it was but you could tell RA was young, maybe younger than you. You could see someone with white-ish hair behind the screen, presumably one of RA's brothers but he wasn't seen since the computer blocked him out.

RA wore what seemed to be red-tainted pointed shades, you wonder why the hell he would wear them in the dark but then consider maybe it was for aesthetic for the selfie, and to hide his eyes and half his face maybe. He also wore a grey hoodie with freaking *bunny ears*, one ear was flopped to the side and the other was standing straight on top his head, it was adorable. The light gave them away clearly and you could see the small smile on the other's face, if only you could see his whole face then it would've been great. He was even giving a 'peace' or 'victory' sign to the selfie which was masterfully taken as far as you could tell- you were an aspiring photographer so you knew these things.

It gave him an aura of mystery and cuteness.

You hum and then tamper with the resolution and the brightness of the pic with the help of photoshop. Grinning at the clearer picture but it was still somewhat vague, but you could see the blue bunny symbol on the hoodie's

chest now, and that the hoodie itself wasn't completely grey, there were blue rings around the elbows and waist, not to mention an almost mechanical design to the hoodie with dark grey lines and 'rivets' that dotted underneath each grey line.

You only knew about the damn things because of your brother, the astute and infamous DIRK LALONDE.

Your name is DAVE LALONDE. You are FIFTEEN YEARS OLD and right now, you and your friends are trying to find another friend you've made over the internet. It was a small dare that RA proposed to you and your friends, well it wasn't officially said -since he rarely ever says anything- but it was something that you and the others took somewhat seriously since you really did want to meet RA.

Why?

Well, why not?

Like you had told RA before, you had a gut feeling about him and you trusted your gut.

You look at the enhanced and brightened picture once more, observing the room's surroundings. There were mechanical parts littered around, and some other computer screens that weren't being used on the wall. You rose a brow at the mechanical and robotic parts there were haphazardly on the floor, was RA's brother a mechanic? Probably another one who looked after your brother, a lot of mechanics, engineers and such looked after your brother, and your sister, Roxy was an amazing programmer after all.

Speaking of sisters, you should tell and show Rose the picture, not to mention Jade and John too. They'd like to see what their mysterious bunny friend looked like. Before you opened BettyBother, you wonder briefly on what your big bro was doing, wasn't he out hunting after Circuit again?

---

"Seb?"

You call out, looking up from your screen to see your younger brother taking a selfie with you in the background. Thankfully, your large screen had hid you from the camera's view. "What are you doing?" You ask, observing him in the darkness- which wasn't really that dark with your vision. It mostly looked like a dim room to you and your brothers, the light bulb to your room had been broken for quite some time now but you hadn't bothered in replacing it since you could see just fine in the dark.

The bunny-hoodie wearing boy glanced back at you, flashing you an adorable smile before looking down to his computing bracelet, the small robot orb coming back into the bracelet- it was a camera for the bracelet, Lil' Seb could control it to take pictures of whatever he liked. It had a limited range of control, but it was an impressive range, effectively acting as a little spy bot for Seb, just as he wanted it when he first asked you to modify the bracelet which once belonged to someone else- Yeah, Lil' Seb stole it from someone, someone who deserved to be stolen from he reassured you and Qrow before. Both of you didn't really care aside from making sure he hadn't been caught in the action.

You obviously weren't the most *moral* type of family. You were an infamous thief yourself and a hacker, Qrow had his own somewhat illegal business going on aside from the harmless Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff comic recreation he had- which was genius, your brother was goddamn awesome and you couldn't wait to see more of the Sbajj comics, and as much as Lil' Seb was the more nicer Strider, he wasn't so innocent.

He broke into places on your behalf, the most stealthiest among you three with advantage of his height and self-mute ways. He was the ninja. It was him.

You frown, "You do know that Qrow isn't going to like that." You pointed out to him, knowing fully well who Seb was talking to on Pesterchum. You had created Pesterchum after finding out that there was no such thing within this universe, only other inferior chat clients as well as *BettyBother*. Of course Crocker Corporation had BettyBother in this universe and it was unfortunately really popular.



It was different from how you remembered, there were no unholy amounts of ads that didn't have subliminal messages laced into its very code. Not one bit.

Crocker Corp really was different in this universe, no evil fish empress tyrant ruling over it and the Earth was actually kind of flourishing with the help of it... It was really different.

Nonetheless, you weren't too fond of BettyBother and 'created' Pesterchum. It was going great, the client was becoming really popular and was your main way to communicate.

Anyway, back to Lil' Seb.

He was talking to Dave, Dave Lalonde, who he had met on Qrow's Sbaj site, Dave was an avid fan of the comic apparently and for some reason Lil' Seb gave Dave his pesterhandle and encouraged the blond to join Pesterchum.

Qrow hadn't exactly enjoyed that but could hardly do anything about it, he only advised Lil' Seb not to do anything drastic or revealing with himself on the chat client. They didn't exactly want to interact with essentially the alternate versions of their original selves, at least you and Qrow didn't, Lil' Seb didn't really have a counterpart in this universe.

Lil' Seb was unique, he was kind of a mesh of you and Qrow, he had the Strider looks and was definitely Strider material but was uniquely and genuinely his own person. He was pretty awesome.

At any rate, Qrow really didn't want Lil' Seb chatting to Dave but let him anyway as long as Dave didn't find out about their true identities- it was already a risk with how you were flying around and messing with Crocker Corp, they didn't need to make it even riskier in the long run.

"I'm not going to like what." Qrow gruffed as he opened the door, the light of the living room bleeding into your room, giving it light as he stood at the doorway. "The fuck happened this time."

Lil' Seb maintained a cool facade as he showed Qrow what he'd done, showing the log.

The orange-eyed Strider stayed silent before pushing his shades up on his head so he could pinch at the bridge of his nose. "... *Sebastian Alice Strider...*" He started, his facade starting to crack as an annoyed scowl was threatening to settle on his face, "*What the fuck have you done.*" He snapped.

Lil' Seb shrugged before grinning and disappearing in a Flash Step.

"Dammit!" Qrow disappeared after him, you blink and sigh, shaking his head and about to continue on on your private little project planning when Qrow came back, "*You, stay. Here. Don't go any fucking where again today until I get the little shit back.*" He said with a warning tone, giving you a look before disappearing before you could point out that his glasses were still on his head and not on his face. He shut the door and once more your room was cast to limited darkness, the only powered on computer you had in front of you being the only source of light for the meanwhile.

...

Well, that was. A thing.

"Not like I'm going anywhere today, already went out early this morning." You mumbled to yourself, slightly annoyed before shaking your head and continued typing into the computer. It was the most secure computer you had on hand. Holographic technology was nice and all but having a nice old computer was nice and somewhat therapeutic for you with the clicking of the physical old keyboard with your keyboards. Think of it as a little hobby you liked to have when you wanted to relax but also be busy.

No doubt that Lil' Seb would keep Qrow busy with another impromptu chase all over the neighborhood, giving you plenty of time to yourself. You smile and lean back against your comfy chair, propping your legs on your table as you save your project into your encrypted and private files. The ones that no one but you could access to. You were awesome like that.

You yawned slightly. When was the last time you had slept? Powered down? Whatever, get rest instead of staying up?

Probably like a week ago, which wasn't much of a problem, sleep wasn't that necessary for you being mostly machine, unfortunately the fleshy organic part of you demanded at least eight hours of sleep once a week and a half. Something you've measured and tested out. You could go on for days without getting tired but after seven or nine days you get sleepy and have to crash.

Sometimes you take naps and a day is added with no problem, maybe you should do that, you didn't have much to do anyway.

You stretched slightly, the slight whirring of your mechanical joints clear in your ears and only yours. You angle yourself on the chair and anchor your feet on the table, facing away from the door and getting out a pillow from your sylladex to make yourself comfortable- bed? What bed? You were fine without a bed, the plush chair, a pillow and the occasional blanket is all you need for a good snooze.

You lock your computer and set a mental timer in your head, an hour nap would be enough. As soon as you close your eyes, you powered down- blacking out with the plans of waking up an hour later---

Only to come back online minutes later with a gasp as your chair was forcefully moved, you grab at the arms of your chair so you wouldn't unintentionally fall out of your plush seat when your legs fell off the table with a thud on the floor and your shades fall from the nose of your face, you sputter -sputter, a Strider doesn't **sputterwhatthefuc-** as your mind reboots. The sudden movement had disturbed your systems and forced you awake from powering down, you look up to see who the fuck woke you up from your map, fully expecting to see Qrow only for your red eyes to widen at the one responsible for your awakening.

There, looming above you with hands firm on the back of the chair, was a set of familiar *burning orange eyes* which were wide at the sight of you. Dressed in subpar clothing that somehow still suited him because *of course*

*they did, was Dirk Motherfucking Lalonde. He looked down at you with wide, curious and disbelieving eyes-only, you don't see that.*

***TT: Dirk.***

*You see Dirk.*

***TT: Don't do this.***

*You see Dirk looking down at you.*

***TT: I can't let you do that, Dirk.***

*You see him frown and scowl.*

***TT: Please do not do this, Dirk.***

*You don't have arms, legs, you don't have a legitimate body but it **cracks** when Dirk clenches his hands around your **fragile** body. **you're cracking it HURTS***

***TT: Don't kill me.***

***TT: Please***

*You are fragile and he's **about to kill you.***

***TT: I am scared.***

***you're about to die to not EXIST please please please***

***TT: I am scared scared not to exist.***

***TT: Aren't you?***

***"HAL!"***

*You don't remember falling to the floor and curling up in a tight ball, chest tight, breathing in small panicked breaths and shivering like a goddamn **fragile leaf in the wind.***

Sebastian is above you, looking worried from behind his shades, hunching over you protectively. "Hal." He says softly, hands gripping your black and red shirt. In front of you, Qrow is standing defensively with his sword out and pointed threateningly at the offender.

Jake ~~Eng-Crocker~~ stood in front of him, protectively and heroically putting himself between your brother's sword and Dirk Str-*Lalonde* who stared at you with an unreadable expression, no, not unreadable. There's concern, curiosity, regret and so much more *emotion* in his face and it's *wrong* - ~~where is the hatred and self loathing?~~ but he's *staring at you* as you regulate your breathing.

"... Circuit?" He says hesitantly, glancing between you and your brothers.

You slowly get to your knees, arms supporting you along with Lil' Seb who quietly fusses over you.

You've fucked up.

You should have listened to Qrow to the start and now you've fucked up.

Shit.

Chapter End Notes

WHoo! What a way to end a chapter!

I've been meaning to update this story but the chapter wasn't really cooperating but I've finally managed to make something out of it!

Hope you enjoy!

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

Whoooo~!! I finished a Metal Hearts chapter!  
It took fucking forever I swear!  
I'm sorry for the long wait guys, and hey, I managed to update something else before March ended! That's good!

At any rate, I hope you enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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### Minutes Earlier

### P.o.V. Change (QS)

Your name is QROW STRIDER and DAMMIT, you *warned* Hal of something like this happening! Curse his adventurous ways over the last two years! Granted, you would have probably done the same if you had been trapped in a pair of shades as well as being part of a troll within a weird sprite hybridization- but then again, being Davepeta had been awesome. Until Nepeta decided it wasn't worth staying when Dirk took Equius away.

Dirk had really been quite the douche when he did that.

Not to be surprised, he was the alternate version of Bro. Only younger and *maybe* less douchey. How would you know you haven't exactly hung out with him before, mostly preferring your m-*brother* Hal. You connected easier with Hal, since he was a sprite and essentially a different version of the Alpha Dirk. Aka, like you used to be to Dave.

Only now, you were both your own persons in this universe, a reprieve really.

You didn't have a goal here, nothing else but to live and protect your *beloved* little brothers. All you wanted was to live a semi-peaceful life in this new universe with your brothers, they were little shits but you cared for them. Seb was especially a little shit, literally, he was tiny and yet he could make so much trouble with ease.

You can't really wrap your head on why and how Seb came with you two in this universe. But then again, you didn't know how the hell you three ended up here in the first place. All you knew was that you were hanging out with Hal and then ending up in some broken down alleyway with a spanking new body complete with legs and inner organs and circuitry.

And don't even get you *started* on the whole, 'part flesh part machine' ordeal that was going on with all three of you. No. Just. No, another time maybe.

After waking up in that weird alley, some freaking out on all three of your parts, you set out to do whatever the fuck you had to do to survive.

Or more specifically, Seb stole a few things and then Hal hacked into the universe's internet to create a new life for yourselves.

It was a bizarre thing to find out that Striders were non-existent in this universe, converted into *Lalondes* of all people. Well, you took advantage of that and just settled down as the Striders that you were, though you did have to change your name- there was already a Dave in this universe, no need to make things complicated, at least you no longer have to refer yourself as Davesprite.

You're just Qrow now.

Normal Qrow Strider who lived with his two younger brothers in the slums of Derse.

Not exactly a good place to stay but it was the least suspicious and no one questioned the fact that three orphan brothers that came out of nowhere moving into the previously abandoned apartment which mysteriously was bought by someone that doesn't exist, or at least, didn't exist.

In Derse, unless it was a big problem, almost everything was written off and wasn't questioned at all. Which worked in their favor.

Of course, you weren't alone in the apartment complex, technically you owned it now and there were a few people that would pay rent to you, either in money, information or whatever else they could use to pay them back. A few junkies, some poor people who were previously homeless but now had shelter, that was pretty much it.

Despite the small money they received from your apartment renters, you weren't really short pressed for it, Hal could effortlessly hack into several banks without being found out and siphon off of them, it was a steady and very illegal way to earn money at first but it was hard setting yourselves up to live actual normal lives. Seb even stole quite a bit with his sneaky little fingers and tiny build, the crowd was none the wiser and the ex-bunny robot was victorious. Of course he made sure not to mess with anyone too dangerous looking.

Things got better after the first couple of months, Hal began to earn legal money by becoming a hacker, a somewhat legal one, various companies actually paid him to hack into their companies to find any weak spots. It paid well enough at first, enough to get you all off your asses.

Then you got a job as a DJ, after scrapping up enough money to buy some decent equipment, though some small parts of it were stolen by Seb. Though it got even better when your admittedly technologically amazing little brother got his hands on- you were now quite famous among Derse and the various nightclubs that littered the area, you even played in Prospit and the Battlefield on rare occasions.

ByrdSpirit.

Or DJ BS for short.

Now a days, you liked to start raves and parties in old places, a reminiscent event to when you first started as a DJ. Though the last place you went to, an abandoned old lot on the Battlefield, was recently bought by CrockerCorp and you could no longer hold raves there, which was kind of



illegal in the first place since you needed a permit to do that in the first place but doing that would take too long. Luckily you weren't caught and your fans protected you from the initial arrest.

Even though no one actually knew who you were.

You wore a giant orange crow head helmet made by Hal, preferring to stay silent and just let the music talk for you instead. And always left when you were sure that no one could see your actual face. It was especially crucial after the fact you were now somewhat famous.

You liked your privacy. Plus, the less attention to you and your brothers the better.

On the side, you recreated Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff which certainly had its own horde of followers. And not-so surprisingly enough, your alternate-*Dave*, it was Dave now, you were Qrow and he was Dave as it always has been- was an avid fan of the website. You had been shocked at first to find out that there was no SBaHJ in this universe but then again it kind of made sense since the trolls had an influence over that.

But at least you could now grace this universe with the masterpiece that was Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff.

Things were great. Things were peaceful.

Until Hal decided to fuck everything over.

You have no idea what went through the little shit's mind when he suddenly revealed one night that he was hacking into Crocker Corp's servers illegally. You continue not to have a fucking idea when Hal was gone for almost half the night, ignoring most of your messages to him only to come home with the declaration of how he had stole parts from the *giant company* that practically *ruled* the Earth despite not actually ruling it.

Which was apparently why Hal had hacked into the corporation anyway. Back in is timeline Crocker Corp had that troll tyrant empress that ruled

from the shadows at the start and then took over and destroyed humanity later on- thankfully it seemed that that wasn't the case for this timeline.

Crocker Corporation was just a really successful multi-billion business company that spanned all over the world and was the top of the top.

But even with the fact that there was *no* alien empress whatsoever in this timeline on Earth, Hal *continued* to make trouble by stealing from and hacking into the corporation whenever he pleased and wanted to. You should have stopped him after the second time he had went out to dismantle CC's robotic drones, but for some reason, you didn't.

And here you were now.

Chasing after Lil Sebastian after he'd done the unimaginable act of taking a selfie and revealing his face to Dave.

Your brothers weren't even trying in hiding were they?

You stormed out of the apartment, after ordering Hal to stay put on where he was while you went after your youngest brother. The little shit was goddamn fast, damn his short, adorably, tiny and fidgety legs.

He ran out of the apartment, you only caught a glimpse of him running through the halls of the complex and towards the general direction of the stairwell of the building. You follow after him, you know for a fact he's not on the third floor, the little shit would have jumped off the stairwell and into the street and that's what you do-

Big mistake it seemed.

You don't notice them when you land, too focused on making sure the landing was painless and proper, but you notice the moment you touched down on the floor, see their shocked faces and you mirror it as you stand up and stair at the two males that were on the street beside you.

They're dressed discreetly, the theme of their clothing was to blend in with the neighborhood and you'd say they did a good job, they probably

wouldn't be recognized if it weren't for the fact you know those faces and the fact you landed right besides them.

You know the pair of orange and green eyes anywhere.

Dirk Lalonde and Jake Crocker were on the streets and were outside their apartment complex.

"Dave?" Dirk blurts out with shock in his eyes as well as disbelief. You manage to wince internally, you were not Dave. Not Dave.

It comes to mind this was exactly why you didn't want either of your brothers doing as they pleased anymore. Your shock morphs as you curse underneath your breath.

"Dammit Hal I knew something like this was going to happen."

You probably haven't said that as low as you thought you would and they could probably hear it but at the moment you did not care as you glance at the both of them with looks of wary.

You also realize that your eyes were unguarded, your shades still on the top of your head because of earlier and you have a brief moment of panic- something that was resolved when you smooth your face and casually bring down your shades, bring up your walls and reinforce the Strider pokerface.

Don't panic. Don't let them know you're panicking. Hide it all. Keep your cool.

~~His Bro would have beaten his ass to next week if he was here.~~

"Er, pardon us for a moment." Jake Crocker spoke up, looking all too confused, concerned and suspicious over your sudden appearance and your overall appearance.

You give a small almost unnoticeable snort, "You are pardoned." You drawled, stuffing your hands into your hoodie to hide how they were balled up and tense, you're itching to get away- which you could, you definitely should, your baby brother was out there somewhere still needing a butt

kicking for what he's done... But, you need to focus on Jake and Dirk for a moment, they were in front of your apartment and so close to you and your brothers.

You need to move them away, just long enough so you and your bros could abscond to another place. One of the safehouses and hideouts that Hal had funded for and built on your word, it would certainly be an abrupt move but you did not want attention from the resident Crocker and Lalonde families of this universe. It would just complicate things and you definitely didn't want that. You were done with complicated things, so goddamn done.

Jake makes a face at your reply, his confusion rises and a small sense of indignation sparks. "Would you kindly tell us on what the bloody hell happened and where we are?" He asks, blurts out more like and is kind of ashamed that he did but he stands by his questions in the end. It's kind of funny. Except his questions are something you don't want to answer.

"What the 'bloody' hell happened is me jumping off the stairs." You deadpanned with a clear unsaid '*duh*' ringing in your tone as you stare at him, his indignation rises as you continue, "As for where you are, you're in front of an apartment complex." Again, '*duh*' rings in your voice.

It annoys him, and amuses Dirk behind him. Which is, something.

It's still unsettling, to see Dirk ~~Bro~~ without his shades, his orange eyes clear to the word even underneath the boring hat that pushed down his bangs in an effort to make him seem inconspicuous, which would have worked if no one was looking or could see those goddamned orange eyes that reminded you of your past in so many different ways.

Hal dislikes Dirk, for reasons his own. You...

You don't really know what or how to think about Dirk Lalonde. Or of Dave Lalonde.

They...

They were versions of you and your family that...

You mentally shake your head and focus when Jake opens his mouth to talk again.

“And what would be the name of this... fine establishment?” Jake asked hesitantly, you snorted out loud at the words ‘*fine establishment*’. The ‘establishment’ was... alright, for a thing. It wasn’t the worse apartment within the Derse slums, hell you could probably say that it’s the best in the area but you won’t because that’s bad for business.

Having something as the ‘best’ around these parts just invited trouble. Just looking back to the ‘best’ bar that had proclaimed itself as the best before being wrecked by robbers who may or may not have been rivals in the business.

You made sure that your apartment building was, ‘Eh’ at most, not to mention the fact you had homeless people and drug dealers, addicts and the such living in the building. It was definitely not a place for a ‘proper’ man like Jake Crocker.

“Welcome to Joint Apartments, you guys looking to move in or what?” You ask bluntly, wanting to know why the hell *Dirk Lalonde* and *Jake Crocker* were doing in the slums of Derse. Well, you have a fucking good idea why but you had to stall for time and prod them for some small information at the least.

Jake made a face at the question, “Er, no.” He answered dryly, looking back to the decrepit building with a look of distaste. There was a look of intrigue and interest there too, and that was something that you did not like in the slightest. “We’re here for other business.”

You twitch slightly and tell him, “The apartment ain’t toleratin’ solicitors.”

He sputters, “We are not solicitors!” He said indignantly.

“Sounds somethin’ a solicitor would’ve said.”

Dirk coughs behind him, attempting to hide his laughter and smile of amusement- it would’ve worked for anyone else but you were a Strider and

Striders were observant motherfuckers so of course you caught it.

Your patience is wearing thin though, Seb is still in the back of your mind and you wonder where the hell the little shit is but for now you're trying to do damage control and try to subtly get Dirk and Jake out of there before they find Hal.

And as if he was summoned by your thoughts, your littlest brother appears out of fucking nowhere, *on a hoverboard*. Thankfully, Dirk and Jake were distracted at the moment, not noticing the hoverboard riding child that was above and behind them, "*You are in so much trouble.*" You hiss underneath your breath, glancing at him, the small Strider isn't paying him any attention, he was looking down at Dirk and Jake with a clear look of surprise.

"*Get the fuck out of here.*" You tell him quietly, knowing his sensitive robotic hearing would pick it up, his gaze moves up to you with a pensive but thoughtful look- you have no idea what's going on in that little head of his but he has *got* to know that the hoverboard that he was riding was the *exact same one* Hal had used in his get away way earlier this morning. How the little fuck got hold of it you don't know but now was *not* the time to be caught with the thing. "*Go.*"

"What was that?" Jake asks, hearing something from you in your hiss to get your little brother to skedaddle the fuck out of there.

Unfortunately for the both of them. Too late.

"Holy shit."

Dirk is looking up to Hal, eyes wide at the sight of the familiar hoverboard and at the figure that was riding it- it was too small to be Hal but Dirk no doubt made the connection that Seb was connected to Hal. "You-"

"*Get the fuck out of here!*" You bark abruptly to Seb, who squeaks -a rare sound from the mute brother- but *finally follows your damn orders* and gets the fuck of here.

Both males startle at your orders and the suddenly leaving Lil' Sebastian. "Wait, hold on!" Dirk says, trying to stop Seb from leaving. Seb doesn't hesitate and vanishes over the buildings. You yourself, wasn't going to stay either and was running by the time both of them turned to look to you.

"Shit!"

You think it was Dirk who cursed that, or maybe Jake, you don't know but you were running for it. Unknown to you, Jake and Dirk were actually prepared for your departure. Somewhat.

Jake took out some sort of gun-looking thing that you didn't know of, too focused on getting the fuck out of the area and away from the apartment. Maybe lead them on or something, but Jake had took out a gun and *shot* at you- not with a bullet, but with *tracker*, the small tracking device latched on the back of your hoodie just as you skidded and ran off into the corner.

You really should have checked your clothing but you were still running.

Damn the future and all it's futuristic bullshit.

You just might make that into your motto, or like a catchphrase or something.

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### **P.o.V. Change (DL)**

– timeausTestified [TT] began bothering tipsyGnostalgic [TG] at 14:29 PM-  
-

TT: Roxy prepare someholding cell in the corporation's lab, preferably three.

TG: wut

TT: Jake and I got Circuit and his brothers, send a car to Joint Apartments in the west side of the Derse Slums.

TG: omg u actually got him???>?

TG: them???

TG: brothers???

TG: give me the deets bro, the deeeetss!!!!

TT: You'll get the 'deets' when Jake and I come back to base with Circuit and his brothers. He has two of them by the way.

TT: Also, prepare to be shocked, they look very familiar.

TG: ???/??

TT: And possibly also send a medic, I accidentally kicked Circuit's big brother into the wall and knocked him out after he almost stabbed Jake.

TT: Doesn't look like he has a concussion but I'm not really good at this shit so send a doctor or something.

TT: Jake's fine by the way, his arm got cut but it's not bad.

TG: wtf???!?!?!?

TG: jakey??? what???

TG: janeys not gonna like that-

TG: u kno what

TG: fine

TG: it'll be a surprise 4 me so aight!!

TG: three cells, a car and a doctor coming right up!! tracing where the fuck u shits are

TG: u better fill us in you fuck, like, wtf happened to you two

TG: to you 5?????

TT: And don't go hacking the car cameras if you actually want it to be a surprise sis.

TT: Don't worry, I'll report everything that happened.

TG: >XPPPPPP

– tipsyGnostalgic [TG] stopped bothering timeausTestified [TT] at 14:40 PM--



You sigh, frowning as you closed BettyBother, glancing over to the three brothers who fell silent after you had accidentally knocked their oldest brother into the wall, bumping his head against the shelf and fell down- presumably knocked out. His head wasn't bleeding thankfully, didn't look like there was a big bump either but the skin on his forehead was bruising slightly.

"I'm really, really, sorry you two." You said quietly, both of them had freaked out when the older-looking Dave -and wasn't that just fucking bizarre? Not to mention Circuit, Hal? Looking almost like a carbon copy to you only younger and slightly different- got knocked out. It was a miracle that the both of them hadn't escaped yet, but then again, Circuit still seemed to be reeling from that... earlier episode.

Jake was at the side, holding his injured hand and eying the three males from a safe distance, wary and somewhat feeling just as guilty as you were feeling no doubt. He hadn't meant to accidentally provoke the eldest brother like that.

Predictably, the smaller you-look-alike doesn't say anything, nor does the youngest brother who looks like a perfect mixture of both Dave and you. Sort of. It was hard to tell with the red glasses that the small-bunny-hoodie wearing child had on his face. And wasn't that something? The kid was wearing a big hoodie with freaking *bunny ears* on the hood, the design was unfamiliar to you, but you do recognize the hoodie the older male was wearing. Obviously he was a fan of DJ ByrdSprite.

As for Hal/Circuit himself. He was wearing a plain red hoodie, and boxers. That was. Okay.

You look away from the pale legs that drew your attention when you realized that Hal was wearing a hoodie and boxers. Hopefully he had a shirt underneath the hoodie or something- this was *not* the time to ogle your once bane of existence. But, you couldn't really help yourself. This man- this *teen* before you bested you and your technology time and time again. Bested your sister in programming and hacking time and time again. Bested your best friend and ex-crush in terms of maneuvering in the air. Bested

your other best friend and boss in everything else when it came to her company. Saw every glitch, every loophole, every gap of failure.

*Years -okay TWO years but still-* going after Circuit, *agonizing* over every failure that he pointed out with ease, *improving* your tech, your tactics, *yourself* in trying to one up the smug thieving hacker, the goddamn *genius* that took apart all of your tech with ease. And Circuit was a genius. The equipment that littered around the apartment said so, the *amazing technological mask* he had made had said so. He almost seemed to *know your mind* better than you did- almost, there were times where you catch him off guard and you *relished* those moments.

But here he was. The man-*teen* behind the mask. Wearing a familiar face, but his *hair* and *eyes* were so different and *unique*. His hair looked curlier, softer, they were a shade lighter than yours. His *eyes*- they were redder than Dave's, and they almost seemed to glow in the darkness- but it was probably just the lighting of the room, the door was open and almost framed Hal in a spotlight as he huddled up against his brothers.

You had no idea on how to feel in meeting your rival like this. And yes, you did consider him your rival, though if Roxy was here she'd go all dramatic and say he was your arch-nemesis or something. You wonder on how she'd react to the fact Circuit-Hal, looked almost exactly like you.

And wasn't that a shock to see after you turned the chair?

---

### **P.o.V. Change (JC)**

Chasing after the fellow that looked like Dave had taken most of the hour- you were thankful that Dirk had the incentive and future-thinking to bring trackers or else you were sure to have lost the man that was so *fast* on two legs. Faster than you and Dirk, and more athletic telling by how he jumped and parkoured his way through the streets and alleys. Trying to shake you and Dirk.

Then Dirk has the brilliant idea of backtracking- obviously that apartment they had been before had been important, so why not go back there and see

what all the hullabaloo was? Like, why the dickens did that man leap from the second floor stairwell?

Also, there might be clues on where Circuit was. They did keep an eye on the tracker though, watching how the indicated light would flicker and tell them where exactly the man went with the digital map they had of the area. Somehow, the man would end up in the most bizarre places. Though, with how athletic he was, it wasn't that much of a stretch to imagine how he ended up where he was.

Seeing the man parkour and climb the side of the wall of a building had been amazing to see, you had to commend him. He was, really interesting.

And telling by the hoodie he had wore, he was also a fan of DJ ByrdSprite- someone you, had mixed feelings for. He was a bloody good DJ, a great musician who seemed like a right bloke but, he just did not seem to like your sister's company. You could somewhat understand but you had no idea on why he kept half of his sessions *illegally*, starting a rave in some underground place, or trespassing on one of your sister's lands to hold a concert without your sister's permission- he was as elusive as Circuit was!

But then again, he also did it for various other companies. Not to mention his strangely sophisticated and unusual music tech that he used for his concerts. Though, it was not too strange you suppose, still, floating records and such was such a unique way to make music.

If it weren't for the fact he was darn popular and also a mystery, he would have definitely faced the multiple charges that were set against him. But no one knew who he was, no one knew how he got away and he had amassed a *shit-ton* of fans.

Like dear golly, there were a lot of people who loved DJ BS. You and Dirk's little siblings were one of them, the four of them found his music amazing. And you had to admit, it was quite something but you wished you knew who was underneath that bird-like mask and that he would actually stop causing trouble whenever he settled down somewhere to make a concert.

Anyway, back to apartment you both went! Making it seem like that you lost the strange doppelganger in your pursuit. He would no doubt return to the apartment anyway at some point.

It didn't take long to get back to the decrepit old apartment.

And decrepit really described the building, but at least it wasn't as bad as the other buildings that they had passed. In fact, it was actually kind of nice!

Though, it seemed that half of the rooms were empty and those that weren't were occupied with... particularly *shady* looking people. You recognized that some of them were drug addicts and such. You... you had no idea how to think about that.

You and Dirk were just about to leave the building after finding nothing of particular interest when you both noticed a particular apartment in the second floor. The door wasn't shut properly but from a peek inside, it was incredibly well kept. And a closer look into it, Dirk discovered *mechanical* parts there. *Familiar* mechanical parts. There was an unfinished version of a *very familiar* looking orb.

"An EMP orb." You exclaimed with shock as Dirk picked it up, looking at it curiously and with a look of expectancy. "Is it...?"

Dirk grinned, turning to you with glinting orange eyes. "Fuck yes it is. *It's his!*" He replied with a touch of excitement. "I recognize this wiring anywhere- *This is Circuit's apartment.*" He whispered, looking around the apartment. There were a few other things you both could recognize, "That kid's hoverboard, it was Circuit's too! I wonder, was that man we chased him? No, his build was bigger, Circuit is slimmer and more petite. But who was he? And that kid?" Dirk muttered, looking over the gadgets that were around the apartment. Kept at the sideline but wasn't particularly messy.

You had to smile slightly as Dirk grew more and more excited, you were getting rather excited as well- You both were obviously *so close* in finding Circuit! Soon, you and he could finally capture that darned but also rather amazing genius!

You and your sister had plans for him after all, and, you did want some retribution for the trouble that he had caused.

“Jake look! His mask...” Dirk called out, startling you out of your thoughts. You turn to him and- indeed, Dirk was standing in kitchen area where he had found Circuit’s mask. You both could recognize that mask anywhere! “... He’s a fucking genius.” Dirk says when he puts it on, “The amount of time he would have put into this, and the materials! ... Damn, I can’t access this.” He says eventually, taking it off and putting it down. You peer at it and are surprised to see the seamless full screen that was behind the mask, the whole inner mask was a screen! The mask was demanding a code though, and Dirk wasn’t that good at decoding things, it was more Roxy’s forte. You should bring the mask to Roxy. She could bypass the need for a password.

With the mask and other gadgets in place, there was no doubt that this was Circuit’s apartment. And the male and child that had previously escaped both you and Dirk were mostly likely accomplices to his work. They worked behind the scenes and probably helped Circuit when they could. There had been evidence of Circuit having help, places where things weren’t suppose to be or secret passages that had obviously been prepared for Circuit in his escape.

You’re starting to wonder more and more who Circuit was if they weren’t the child and man.

Then Dirk found a certain closed door. You had been checking the other rooms, there were two other rooms and one bathroom. The bathroom wasn’t very extraordinary, though there were some color coded items there that obviously belonged to different individuals. Not to mention, ah. *Ahem.* **Questionable** item that, you honestly have no idea what it was but it was perched on the mirror cabinet. The jutting out bottom and bulbous nose was, *interesting* to say the least. You don’t know what crosses your friends mind when he lays his orange eyes on the plush-like item. The look on his face is even more unreadable than usual but there is a tinge of slight interest in the other’s eye, something you would not address whatsoever.

Needless to say, you were out of that bathroom very quickly after making sure that there was nothing of notice in the bathroom.

The other room was a quaint and little bedroom. Though there was only one bed, a rather large bed, big enough to fit three people in. There were some mechanical parts that littered around the room, not really notable except for the familiar hoodie that was draped over one of the chairs that just further proved the fact that Circuit was inhabiting the apartment. And just like the mask, Dirk was all over the hoodie, looking over the garment with a critical eye.

“There’s a fucking mini-camera sewn into the hood- *I fucking knew it.* Sneaky son of a bitch.” Rather than vindictive, he seemed excited. Despite what might others might have thought and how Dirk may act, Dirk Lalonde was *thrilled* with Circuit’s rivalry. It was indeed annoying but it was one of the most interesting things that happened to your best friend, it gave him something to look forward to, you think he thinks you don’t notice the way he gets so *energized* whenever Circuit was involved in any matter. It’s laughable, also quite endearing.

You know of his crush, or well, ex-crush. Unfortunately, you did not feel about him that way and thankfully, he understood that. And so did you. It wasn’t because you weren’t interested at his gender- you were bi for godsakes and *have* expressed interest in your own gender, but you were never interested in him *romantically*.

Dirk was *fascinated* by Circuit. Whether he knows what type that fascination is, you don’t know. You just hope that Circuit would end up as a man that met to whatever expectations that Dirk had for him.

Which led you to the near-present of now.

The final room of the apartment.

Both the living room and bedroom were littered with pieces of equipment, gadgets and unfinished mechanical parts but they had yet to see the *workshop*. Wherever Circuit went to to actually *make* his projects, code his work. It was unlikely that Circuit would keep it in his *apartment* of all

places, but the last room was practically *felt* like a mystery to you. Like there was *something* behind that door, that just *screamed* Circuit.

Dirk was the one who opened the door to that room.

And from there it just spiraled downwards into the ground.

Dirk had opened the door.

The room was dark, and the lightbulb of the room was not working, you had to rely on the light that the hall emitted into the room to see anything since the windows were boarded shut, either that or rely on the light of the monitors- though at the moment, they weren't on so the hall light it was.

The room was probably the biggest room in the apartment, a whole wall was covered in various screens that were turned off. Scattered around the room were robotic and mechanical parts, nothing solid or complete just yet but there were tools that were scattered around as well.

Near the wall of screens, there was a desk with a single computer on top of its table. Before it, was a comfy plush chair. Now, the desk with the single computer was certainly attention-worthy *but there was someone in the chair*.

Did you and Dirk dare hurt?

Was it going to be that simple?

Answer? *No*.

Dirk called out hesitantly to the figure in the chair that seemed so relaxed, you could spy a pair of pale feet propped against the desk. "Circuit?"

No answer.

You and Dirk were suspicious, not to mention Dirk had been practically at the edge of seat- energy flitting through his veins and excitement beating his heart like wild drums to a rhythm that only the Lalonde could hear. In a fit of actions that you doubted that Dirk actually planned out- he strode

forward and took hold of the chair, forcefully turning it along with the figure that had been sleeping in it. Which, just why? You have slept in a chair before, and as comfy as the chair seemed, sleeping like that was not really comfortable in reality.

The thought of sleeping in chair were instantly wiped out at the sound of sputtering and a surprised gasp, whether it came from Dirk or Circuit was uncertain, but Dirk had clearly froze as he loomed over Circuit. You couldn't get a clear look of his face so you moved and-

*Gadzooks.*

He looked just like Dirk!

Somewhat.

His hair and eyes were different, and he looked younger than your best friend!

"Circuit?" Dirk questioned quietly, a tone of clear disbelief in his voice because *that was a familiar face* he was staring down into. And yet, it was so different with those bizarre red eyes that almost reminded you of Dave. This was so peculiar. First an older Dave-look-alike and now a younger Dirk-look-alike! But the main question stood. Was he Circuit?

The answer wasn't answered just yet as the Dirk-look-alike *spasmed*, his breath shortening and his eyes clenching in a concerned way. You both panicked, wondering what in the heck was happening with the man-teen but just as you were both trying to calm him down- with unfortunate failure, a certain *someone* had appeared back in the apartment.

*"Get the fuck away from my brother."*

Dave's -you *must* learn their actual names- look-alike growled dangerously after suddenly pulling both you and Dirk away from the trembling teen that fell from his chair and was now curled into a tight ball on the floor. The orange-eyed Dave actually pulled a bloody damned *sword* out of thin air when he stood between you and the panicky breathing teenager, the



previous hoverboarding child having slipped inside as well and was now trying to sooth his supposed older brother.

Seeing all three of them together, and the previous exclamation, proved that they were family. Though that was not on your mind as you stood between a sword and your best friend, keeping him behind you as you bravely faced the sharp and *very* dangerous object that was pointed threateningly at your throat. Your heart is beating in your ears as you face with *death*- a tad dramatic maybe but the way those familiar yet unfamiliar orange and slightly red eyes looked at you with such *intensity*, there was a thrum in your veins as you faced with a clearly dangerous foe.

Behind you, you hear Dirk hesitantly call out to the now slightly calmed down teenager. The small tot had successfully calmed him down to coherency it seemed.

After that, you don't exactly know what happened -you were too busy focusing on orange-eyed older-looking Dave with a sword- but you were almost stabbed by the sword-wielding blond, *almost*, he did get a knick at your side, nothing too dangerous but in retaliation Dirk kicked him into a shelf where the previously sword-wielding blond hit his head and knock him out.

So here you were now, slumped against the wall, hand kept tight against your bleeding side while Dirk called in Roxy and backup to pick the five of you up.

You learn the three other's names on the way out, Circuit- or *Hal* as he says- tells you such after ten minutes of bloody awkward silence. Bloody being almost literal as you were still bleeding, at least Sebastian, 'Lil' Seb' as you'd be insisted to say instead, gave you a first aid kit to deal with it.

You feel very tired, but also very scared- Jane was going to have a *bloody damned fit* over the fact you got hurt. Your sister was a scary kind of caring, very caring but also very scary when it came to it.

Still, you wished that older-D-Qrow was alright. You were awake, he... was not.

Bleeding in a limousine with a your best friend, a criminal, the criminal's brothers which one of them was unconscious and probably concussed was not really a way on how you though you'd be going home as.

It was fine though, you caught Circuit, his adorable little brother and his concussed but also fairly attractive and strong older brother. What a day.

You still wanted to know why both Hal and Dirk looked so similar but that would be saved for later. After you were patched up and healed.

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## Chapter End Notes

How was it? Good? Bad? I have no idea. I'm very tired and my head hurts but I've managed!

Also, Qrow and Jake, a good pair or not? I wasn't so sure but I just put in a *little* interest in Jake's part as a good possibility. Whether or not it'll be a solid ship pairing is undecided for now. The main target is of course DirkHal :]

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

I should be focusing on other things but after rereading this over and over again with it eventually getting stuck in my head- Yeah I just had to update it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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### P.o.V. Change (HS)

This wasn't really the first time you were in an interrogation cell, it was your second time you've been in one. The first time had been as Circuit, and it had been in a police station instead of a Betty Crocker facility- escaping the station was easy, you had all of your supplies on hand. Inaccessible and hidden away from the police with the help of your sylladex so of course escaping the place had been easy. And you were wearing your Circuit get up as well.

Right now, you were in a plain red hoodie and fucking black boxers. Any other person would be feeling humiliated, you were more preoccupied with the fact you were actually caught by Dirk and Jake and trying to think of a way out with the limited items you have in your dex.

Seb has your rocket board, but he was in a different place and you couldn't contact him. They took away your shades, and the back up ones you have in your dex would stay in your sylladex since you didn't want them taking away that as well. They were keeping a close eye on you no doubt, the multiple cameras in the room were a big sign to that. You could always short circuit them, you have a few leftover EMP orbs on hand.

But they were limited and who knows what would happen if you used that.

You have a few other things but all of your useful equipment was foolishly left back in the apartment, a place where they were no doubt flipping upside

down to find the secrets you're stashing in there. The projects you have there are most probably compromised, the data in your computers aren't though. They're encrypted and even Roxy would have trouble going against the firewalls, encryption and digital defenses you've left on your files. Those were just copies anyway, the real information you have is stored directly into your head. The most safest databank you have on yourself. No one else has access to your head besides yourself and maybe your brothers. The base of your neck itched but you ignore that.

So, here you were, in the interrogation room, contemplating plans on what to do.

Even if you could currently escape, you'd only be able to escape on your own. Your brothers were stuck with you in different cells. Like hell you would escape on your own even if you know they'd both want you to. Qrow was fucking hurt for fuck's sakes. They were going to treat him of course but the fact of the matter is that right now; you're pinned and trapped against the corner.

You fucking hate it.

You hate the fact you're stuck in this cell.

You hate the fact they took away your shades.

You hate the fact you have limited options right now.

You hate the fact you're in your boxers because the chair you're in is unfairly fucking cold.

Your ass has never been colder than it has been right now.

You resolutely ignore the way the walls seem to be closing in on you, the slight chill of the room is definitely not getting underneath your skin and bothering you one bit. You're not claustrophobic. You may be a bit high-strung right now but you're not bothered by how you're all alone in this bright fucking room with cameras on every corner, leaving no possible blind spot for you to take advantage of.

Your options are limited, but the one thing you can count is that they -Dirk, everyone else out there- were going to underestimate a certain blond little shit that was his precious baby brother. Seb would be able to escape, he'd be able to do something. You'd have to plan around whatever he's going to do. You just hope you can get all three of you out of here and abscond into one of the safe houses you've invested and created.

The nearest one was still so fucking far away, but Seb would know the quickest and safest way towards there. You know a few routes yourself but when it comes to knowledge of the area, your little brother has the upper hand since he sneakily scampers his way around absolutely *everywhere*. Small fidgety legs taking him to places that most people don't think to go to or just generally avoid.

There was a reason he was in charge of planning your escape routes.

You take in a deep breath, leaning against the metal table, letting the metal-made cuffs on your wrists clink together on the surface as you tap a small beat on the table. Something Qrow was working on for his next raving concert. He was suppose to play somewhere on the Battlefield, either an abandoned warehouse or factory- no wait, you're pretty sure he was aiming for the factory. Kinda cramped but better acoustics, not to mention it was about to be demolished anyway so might as well.

You idly take note to do maintenance on your brother's equipment, upgrade them again- that wouldn't be enough of an apology to Qrow but he definitely deserved to get his stuff upgraded and more. He was right, you'd become a bit too cocky and now you were all paying the price.

Damn.

*Tap. Tap. Tap tap tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap tap taptaptaptapta-*

Did the room become smaller? No, that wasn't logical to assume but- it felt like it was smaller. Were your lungs shrinking or did they cut off the air in this place? You breathe heavily through your nose, trying to see if you could still breathe. You couldn't- no, you could. You were breathing just fine. But, it seemed like-

No, no, you were- you're just, paranoid. And worked up. You're fine. Everything was fine. You're just really bored. And paranoid. Boredly paranoid. Parabored.

Suddenly, a doorway appeared at the side, the metal panel glowing briefly in white before sliding into the wall.

Someone was coming in.

You stop tapping the table, inhaling sharply before exhaling slowly and wear a languid smile, leaning away from the table and back into your chair. The epitome of relaxed, it is you. No one else is as relaxed as you. You're the most relaxed motherfucker in this room.

Two people come into the room, the door sliding back in place and disappearing seamlessly into the wall. You're acquainted with them- very much so, but they aren't acquainted with them. Roxy and Jane.

They're as beautiful as you remember.

But oh so different as well.

Roxy smiles at you, looking intrigued, curious and observant- not to mention ultimately *sober*. This Roxy doesn't have an soporific problem, she drinks but not as much as the Roxy you know. She's older, grown into a lovely young woman, head programmer of Jane's company and the proud older sister to her would-be mother, though she doesn't know that. And it's not even true here, as far as you know Rose really is her little sister and their mother was someone you don't really know. A mix of Rose and Roxy, her name is Rook, an accomplished writer and scientist.

She's someone of interest, for not only she was Roxy and Rose's mother, but Dirk and Dave's mother as well.

Jane looks more professional, there's a polite smile on her face. She has a calculating look on her face, though it's still somewhat soft as she looks at you behind her circular red-rimmed spectacles. She's really the Heiress of the Crocker Corp Empire, though you're sure they don't call it an Empire.

Just a Corporation. You had looked through the cracks of the Corporation and found no proof of the Water-Tyrantess of CrockerCorp, the Batterwitch herself did not seem to exist in this universe. Betty Crocker was only a fictional figurehead, and the real woman behind it was Jane's estranged grandmother who was retired and had left the Empire in the capable hands of her son and granddaughter.

Joanne Crocker was another person of interest.

Roxy was wearing a pink ensemble, a sleeveless pink blazer with a mid-sleeved blouse underneath it. A pink cat stitched lovingly on her shoulders, her symbol- only without the extra pair of eyes. Instead, pink futuristic visors were over the one pair of eyes. They matched the actual pink-tinted visor on her face. On her forearms were a pair of silver bracers with pink designs on them- they were obviously tech-based, Dirk probably made those and you want to take them apart just to see how they work. Well you already suspect on how but, taking apart things Dirk made was just something you liked to do on the near-daily. She wore slim black jeans and calf-high hot pink boots that you just know has something more to them. The soles were a different shade and seemed a bit more metallic compared to the rest of the boot.

Jane's outfit was more simple but sharp, a crisp bright blue suit, a blue blazer over a white blouse, the red Betty Crocker spoon logo stitched on the breast of her blazer's pocket. On her right wrist was a thick red bracelet with white and bright blue designs on it, another tech-brace, well, bracelet. It was like Seb's bracelet but no doubt different. You want to dismantle that too, what can you say, you're in a slightly dismantling-esque mood. A light blue pencil skirt hugged her hips while black stockings painted her legs, her feet were snug within red heels and you wonder if this is what your Jane would have worn should she have actually *normally* gotten the Crocker Empire.

Probably.

You feel underdressed before these two beautiful ladies- actually, *they're* overdressed compared to you in your hoodie and boxers. You weren't even

wearing socks or footwear. This oddly seemed like a fantastical setting for a mediocre porno.

Also it was unfair that they got to keep their eyewear whereas you were shadeless. The extra shades in your sylladex called out to you in a figurative and non-existent sultry voice. Soon, soon my love, you thought to yourself dryly as you kept up your lazy smile and demeanor to the familiar young women before you.

"Greetings Circuit," Jane starts, smile still polite but you can see the determination and cunning plans behind her light blue eyes. "Or shall I say Mr. Strider instead?" She says, phrasing it as a question but you know it was more of a statement. They know your surname now, how cute.

Your lazy smile widens a touch, and your eyes are ~~naked~~ half-lidded. "Please, call me Hal. Mr. Strider is too fuckin' proper." You reply, sinking into the frankly uncomfortably metal chair but you ignore that in favor of exuding the aura of someone who was not wanted for several break-ins, technological theft, theft in general, vandalism, property damage, running from the law, etc.

Roxy's lips quirk higher and you count that as a personal win, you like making Roxy happy. She deserves to be as much.

Jane is not as amused, but she concedes. "Hal then." She says, making a move to sit down and immediately a chair comes from behind her, summoned from the floor- wow, what a high-tech interrogation room. Though you have to wonder how many times Jane practiced that because the way she sits down so effortlessly at the incoming chair is amazing, and hilarious when you think on the mistakes she must have made to achieve such a feat.

The eldest female Lalonde stays standing behind her, arms behind back and trying to seem as professional as she could. Which was very. A lot of people seem to forget that despite her optimistic demeanor and carefree personality, she was a woman who graduated early in her teens and was one of the lead programmers, biological scientists and just, one of the smartest women to live in this generation. It must be the pretty face. Or maybe the



way Roxy sometimes hacked into other websites and left digital cats on them. But that just showcased on how smart she actually is... and also how she generally was.

But yeah, you give her a solid 9 out of 10 for serious effort.

"Now, Hal, we've got a lot to discuss." Jane continues after sitting down like a proper business woman. Back straight, eyes sharp, fingers entangled together on the table. "You've caused a lot of trouble for us you know." She tells you and you snort, no shit. You've been japing, terrorizing and causing a *lot* of trouble for Corcker Corp. "And you're in a lot of trouble for it."

Your face picks up a faux-innocent look, "Oh really now?" You ask, finally, you stop slouching in your chair and adjust yourself to sit a bit straighter. Not too straight, you don't want to be mistaken as serious right now of course. You lean away from your chair and back on the table, laying you arms on the metal surface so you can support your face on your palm, a smirk on your face. "And what exactly does Crocker Corp want to do about lil' ole me?" There's no point in denying it. You've got too many shit out in the open now.

The one time you left your Circuit shit in your apartment, you're paying for it. Your organization skills need improvement- granted this isn't the worse you could pull off, your other work stations are much more worse than your apartment, but at least they get to be cleaned up from time to time.

Jane rose a brow, "You're attesting the fact you're Circuit Hal?" She asks with interest, she's caught on how relaxed you are. "This makes things easier then." She says pleasantly, she unfurls her fingers and tap against her Betty-Crocker Tech-Bracelet. A holographic screen appears before her, hovering between you both. Your keen red eyes look up to the hologram with vague interest.

It's a contract.

For *you*.

How predictable. But utterly amusing nonetheless.

They don't want to hand you over to the police, or to the government. You're too valuable and resourceful for that for various reasons.

For the most part they want your sylladex, they want to replicate it. They want to know what you know, they want you on your side.

You can't say you're not flattered.

"Mr. Hal Strider, I, Jane Crocker, am willing to pardon you of your crimes *if* you come work for my Corporation." Jane beams at you, oozing heiress charm even though she's spewing the cliché type of words you hear from movies. Or maybe they are legitimate words that aren't cliché at all, but you've definitely heard that type of sentence from multiple movies before you came into this reality. Still, the fact she's oozing this kind of charm, it works for her.

Unfortunately it doesn't work on *you*. You're utterly immune from her lovely heiress charm, you acknowledge it, but you're not that easily swayed.

And she knows that but her eyes are glinting. "We're willing to house you and your brothers," She continues, you resolutely keep your facade even if she's bringing up the subject of your brothers, "And welcome you all to the Crocker Corp family. Admittedly we have new interest in them now that we know of their existence alongside you." Dirk must have told them on how Qrow got his sword out of nowhere. They know he has a sylladex- well, they still don't know it's called a sylladex. They know he has the same 'miraculous' storage system that you have and they correctly suspect that Lil Seb has one as well.

"Speaking of your brothers, your elder brother Qrow is making a full recovery in our infirmary. Thankfully he does not have a concussion, or doesn't seem to be. It was quite hard to tell as for some reason, our medical scanning systems didn't seem to work on him." Right that. Haha, that must have been surprising for them. "So we had to physically check him the old fashion way. So, as far as we know it he will be fine."

You can't help but ask, the small sliver of concern pokes at your now-human heart. It's an unfortunate thing but you are also curious. "And Jake, your own brother, how is he?" You ask, watching her carefully. She doesn't outwardly react but her eyes darken slightly. "I must say, I have to apologize on behalf of Qrow. He's really protective over my little brother and I, being the eldest after all." There's a small sense of understanding behind her eyes, she knows the feeling, she begrudgingly accepts the apology in her head while outwardly smiling benevolently.

"It's quite alright. Jake is fine- your brother has done minimal damage to his side, it was easy to heal it over." That's good, Qrow doesn't usually go for murder even in a protective rage. He really is the best big brother, it is him, you really have to think of a good apology present when this was all over. "As for your little brother, Sebastian-

You interrupt her, you have to. "Seb, he prefers to be called Lil' Seb or just Seb. Sebastian is too proper and usually for when he's in trouble."

She takes it in stride, you mentally applaud her. "Seb, he's currently staying in a child-friendly room so you do not have to worry about him or Qrow."

Really now. That's good.

"Really now. That's good." You echo your thoughts, but immediately afterwards you think on how he's probably already on his way to either you or Qrow. You wonder when they'll finally notice that. For now, you stall you suppose. "You know, I'm surprised Dirk Lalonde's not in here with you." You admit, glancing between the two girls before glancing to the mirror at the side, "Either he's tending to Jake, or he's outside this room right now. Watching."

Roxy's little snicker, a break from her serious face, confirms your thoughts. "Yeah, he wanted to come in my place but- nah, I told him I got this." That was probably a good call, you'd be more antagonistic on principle the moment he stepped into the room.

He did cause you a panic attack, somehow found your apartment and was the reason why you were here in the first place.

Okay, now you want to antagonize and annoy him now. Maybe Roxy should have let him in.

"He is totes watching us now though." She said, waving at the mirror with a grin. You smirk, turning your head to look at the mirror again, this time giving him a cheeky look, you flip him off and lazily salute him with your middle finger. Roxy chortles at the action and you wish you could see Dirk's face, to see his reaction to that. You turn to look back at them.

You're about to talk to them, your mouth open and ready to continue talking when a loud *PING* from your shades in your sylladex gains not only your attention but also the attention of Roxy and Jane. Damn, you forgot to mute them.

*PING.*

You want to ignore it.

*PING.*

Unfortunately.

*PING.*

You don't think you can.

*PING.*

Okay, what the hell.

*PING.*

You make a show by frowning, you raise a hand and motion with a 'hold-up-one-moment' sign as you casually uncaptchalogue the shades right unto your face. The sharp takes of breath is truly amusing to hear but you look at your shades.

*PING.*

Who the hell was pestering you?

*PING.*

---

-- snakeBytes [SB] began pestering automaticRecreator [AR] at 16:01 PM -  
-

SB: yo ar

SB: you missed our session

SB: i still kicked ass but

SB: not like you to miss something like that

SB: we scheduled it and everything

SB: ?

SB: hal?

AR: Damn.

AR: I forgot.

AR: Sorry Mal.

SB: it's fine

SB: but what happened dude?

SB: did you pass out again?

SB: see this is what happens when you have a fucked up sleep schedule

AR: I am sensing a hypocrite.

AR: But no.

AR: Apartment got broken into.

SB: shit really??

SB: are you okay?

SB: called the cops?

AR: Somewhat.

AR: I'm in custody right now.

AR: So I can't exactly play anything for a while.

AR: Or do anything else for the matter.

AR: So that's my general situation.

SB: damn

SB: that sucks fucking ass

AR: Don't I know it.

AR: If anything else happens I'll let you know.

AR: Eventually, when I can.  
SB: alright  
SB: wait if you're custody right now then how  
AR: I have my ways.  
AR: ㄟ  
SB: snrk  
SB: alright  
SB: good luck hal  
AR: Thanks Mal.  
AR: See you later.

-- automaticRecreator [AR] ceased pestering snakeBytes [SB] at 16:04 PM  
--

-- automaticRecreator [AR] began pestering rabbitAutomaton [RA] at 16:01 PM --

AR: Seb.  
RA: =(:D)!!  
AR: Hey baby bro.  
AR: How you doing? You okay?  
RA: (\\_/)  
RA: (>u>)b  
RA: (\\_/)  
RA: (>?>) ~??  
AR: I'm doing okay.  
AR: Where are you.  
RA: =(:S)  
RA: Going for big bro  
AR: Alright.  
AR: Check on him before going to me.  
AR: I'm in an interrogation cell.  
AR: Locate my signal, I'll locate yours.  
AR: With Jane and Roxy, Dirk is outside watching.  
AR: Do what you can lil bro.  
RA: =(>:3)  
RA: (\\_/)

RA: (>v>) b!!

RA: =(:3) ~<3

RA: See you soon

AR: Love you too lil bro.

AR: Good luck.

-- rabbitAutomaton [RA] ceased pestering automaticRecreator [AR] at  
16:03 PM --

---

So it was just Mallek.

Damn, you feel a bit guilty for forgetting and missing your game session with him. A nice normal game session. Hah, how you wish for that right now.

You'll make it up to him when this is all over, eventually.

Though while you're chatting with Mallek, you also make sure to pester your lil bro. Seb seems to have already escaped and so far it hasn't been found out yet, that's good. He's heading for Qrow which is also good, means you have to stall for as long as you can before someone finds out that a small blond in a bunny hoodie disappeared from their current custody. Seb can check up on Qrow while you keep yourself busy.

Of course you're not only busy with chatting, you keep an observant eye to both Jane and Roxy.

They've moved away from you a bit, seemingly whispering to themselves in hushed inaudible tones. Actually, looking closer... Oho? A small silencing field? Their lips are moving and you know they are making sounds but you can't hear them. Nice, you should have thought about that yourself sooner. You'll look into it later though. You look neutrally serene in your shades, slightly comforted by their familiar presence on your face as you lounge on the still uncomfortable metal chair. This was much better. You should have done this sooner.

Though you had to reveal the fact you have your sylladex on your person and now they were at a disadvantage since they had no idea what you were packing. You again, don't have much. You could probably scrape by in an escape if you tried but right now Seb is making his way towards Qrow, which needs time.

Roxy and Jane glance to and fro from you and then back to each other, even glancing back at the mirror where Dirk was. You catch Roxy's visor softly glowing, almost unnoticeable. She must be talking to Dirk and relaying it back to Jane, communicating between the three of them on what to do.

You've finished with you conversations, for a moment you wonder yourself on what to do before you decide 'fuck it' and do things on the fly. As gracefully as you can of course. With lazy flourish, you lean back on the chair, propping your naked feet on the metal table and precariously forcing the metal chair to tip back as you do so. The table is fucking cold on your naked skin but you don't let it affect you. You wish you had pants on, but you'd make do in your hoodie and boxers. It was their fault for not providing such a thing.

Both girls are surprised by your sudden action, Jane looks a bit scandalized while Roxy gives a silent snort. Though, they stare as your shades disappear into nowhere. Into your sylladex and you give them an amicable smile. "Sorry ladies," you say as you support your head with your cuffed hands, "A concerned friend contacted me. I assured them that I was alright and they've calmed down." It was a vague truth.

Your back is aching, your joints are straining, your legs are cold as fuck and your neck might get a crick from all of this- it would be so much easier if you had your comfy as hell chair to do this on instead of this uncomfortable piece of shit metal-made furniture but you make do with it. Presentation is key, and you present yourself as an unconcerned criminal who's unbothered by what's going on or what will happen to him.

"Now, where were we?"



He's actually here.

You've actually caught him.

You've caught Circuit and he's confined in a room- so close to you yet so far.

Satisfaction wars with guilt in your stomach as you stare at him from behind the one-way mirror. Taking in every detail of his person.

He looks like you, only younger and with noticeable differences. For one, his eyes are a magnetic red. Bright and unique. They're like Dave's red eyes but they're not exactly that. The shade is off and there's just something more to them. He's shorter than you, probably by the forced choice of age but you weren't that short when you were his age. Probably. You were a tall fucker and he was shorter than you.

His hair is less spiky than yours, more soft-looking and curly, a few shades different from yours. The same goes for his skin, it's pale, paler than yours. Paler than Dave's, but not unhealthily so. His jaw is less pronounced than yours, he's slimmer and- his legs are free from hairs.

You shouldn't be taking note of that but the undeniable fact is that he's pantsless in there, stuck in boxers and a hoodie. You don't even know if he has anything underneath the hoodie, you shouldn't wonder if there is. You should have offered him pants. Maybe you should right now.

But he looks so, stoic in there. Not an emotion on his face, eyes half-lidded as he leaned against the table. You'd think he wasn't concerned by what was going on, and for a moment you do and you think on how this smug little fuck has been messing with not only the Corporation for the past two years but also with *you* for the past year. Anger began to bubble in your stomach.

And then he takes in a deep breath, you wouldn't have noticed if you hadn't been watching him so closely. His eyes are burning underneath those half-lidded eyelids, red and uncomfortable. He's tapping against the table, a restless beat, catchy and fast- too fast. You see him cracking slightly underneath the relaxed and bored persona he's putting up and the anger in

your stomach settles into more guilt as you remember wide, panicked red eyes. Fear piercing through your chest from those two pinpricks of scarlet.

You caused him a panic attack. And it looks like he was going end up in another one, you have to-

You don't realize how tense you are until your neck practically snaps to look at how the door opens with Jane and your sister casually coming through. Immediately, the cracks you see in Circuit- in *Hal*, you know his name now, you have to use it- seal up immediately and his relaxed and lazy attitude almost look real to you.

Almost.

You'd caught the glimpse of what was underneath and you would never forget.

Forcing yourself to relax, you take in a deep breath and watch both of your girls face Hal. You're not jealous, a bit salty maybe that Roxy managed to convince you to not go in there but it was for the best. You would've immediately gotten into Hal's face about the shit he's pulled, of the shit he made, of everything he's done- regardless of your guilt. You're near-bursting at the seam to face him face to face once more. But with less fear and panic of back then in Hal's apartment. The memory of then and now makes your stomach churn awkwardly.

You wanted it to be like when you chased after him, see his wit and cunning tactics- you finally had a face to put on that faceless Circuit act he pulled for the past couple of years.

*"Would you like to play a game Dirk?"*

You've been playing the game for almost more than a year now. And now it was going to end.

If things went right, you won't have to chase after Hal anymore. You'd have him by your side, pick his brains and see what made him tick.

You *earned* this.

Now if only the guilt would stop gnawing at your insides so you can enjoy this.

It never occurs to you that things might end up wrong, because how could they? You have him, he's in this room while both his brothers are separated from him but kept at a close distance. Jake was with Qrow in the infirmary, getting patched up and taking watch over the still unconscious man. As for their little brother, Sebastian -or Seb as Hal corrects Jane and you accommodate respectfully- was being watched over by trusted assistants of yours. They should be able to keep an eye on him.

You're calm and collected. Watching the three of them within the interrogation room with a critical eye that was solely aimed at Hal. Watching his body language and interpreting it to the best of your ability. He's infuriatingly skilled in keeping himself calm in the face of others, maybe they should've left him alone a bit longer -*quickenning breath, ceaseless tapping, infinitesimally small cracking facades*- or maybe not.

Still, you know this is an act. No one can be that comfortable in that metal chair. *No one.*

He was faking it and he was *good* at it.

He had one of the best poker faces that you've ever seen- and you've seen your Dad's poker face. For a moment you think on how similar you two are, the similarities between him, his brothers and your siblings. Were they- no, there was no conceivable time your father could ever even try to cheat with your mother. Not that he would. He was foolishly in love with her, so much so that he's given up a lot of his life just for her, for you, for your siblings, for family.

Dante Lalonde was an honest man and even if Hal, Qrow and Seb were his sons -which you doubt, the timing and ages don't line up with the timeline at all- he would never let them stay in the streets and in the dark of their lineage. Family was family and he would gladly bring them into their family even at the risk of Mom being mad at him.

And she would, she'd be devastated but then she'd understand and take the three in as her own the moment she saw them because she was *Mom*. A woman with the same bleeding heart as Dad had, maybe even more so. Rook Lalonde was the kindest woman, the best mother, the fact you're bias to her means nothing. She was there for Jane, Jake, John and Jade when their mother died and left James a single parent. Dad was there too, James was his best friend so of course he would. You suspect there's something more there lately but you've been too busy with things to fully look into things.

'Things' being the young man in the interrogation cell you're watching right now.

You should get a DNA sample, just to see if you're genetically related or not. Maybe you are, but you don't know any other family members your Dad has. He was an only child as far as you know.

You send a text to Jake, DNA sample, that would be a good idea. Maybe trace back the three of their lineage, to see if they have any other family other than each other. Though that might take a while if the sample would end up going through the ringer like it had with your bioscans with Qrow.

Somehow they didn't work at all when they were used on him. Did Hal do something about that? Make sure he and his brothers couldn't be scanned? Why? Was there something wrong with them? Or were they just that paranoid?

You'll figure it out. You'll figure *him* out.

Your breath hitches as you hear the *PINGS* coming from nowhere *but* Hal. That didn't seem right, they had taken away almost everything from him. His shades, wonderfully high-tech along with his brothers oh you and Roxy are so going to look into that as well as into Hal's mask, the small tools in his hoodie pocket, so what- *oh*.

Shades, triangular, ridiculous but also somewhat cool, appear out of nowhere on the bridge of his nose as he casually sits back, raising a hand, both since they were connected at the wrist things to the cuffs you made.

They shouldn't detach from each other or from each wrist until you unlock them yourself. You stare at him, at the extra pair of shades he apparently had- oh he *does* have that strange and ever so intriguing hammer-space-like storage with him right now.

Qrow had one, how else could he summon a sword out of nowhere? But he was unconscious and unable to use it. When he came into the infirmary, they couldn't find any physical indicator on the mysterious inventory space they've been so interested in for so long. Neither could they find it on Seb who kept dutifully silent and blank at them whenever they asked or addressed them. Eerily so. Like a doll.

Roxy gains your attention when she activates the small silencing field you've installed in her bracers. It's a prototype but so far it's worked wonderfully and she absolutely loved it. She's talking to both you and Jane.

TG: so he does have the thing

TG: the space thing omg

TG: its so cool in person but where tf does he get it???

TT: That's what we're trying to figure out ourselves Rox.

TT: Why aren't you taking his shades away?

TG: snrrrk

TG: as if he'd let me

TG: i move and he'll like

TG: put them away and shit

TG: doesn't look like he's doing anything tho

TT: What if he's contacting his brothers?

TG: grows still unconscious in the infirmary with jakey lookin after him while the lil bunny boy seb, v cute btw, is still with azzy

Azdaja better keep a good eye on him then. You have a feeling that the small boy is a crafty little thing. You'd look after him yourself but... You'd miss Hal's meeting with Jane and Roxy then.

You watch his face, even more inscrutable now with the shades on. They look like they fit there. That they're supposed to be there, your fingers twitch, you want to take them off. After a few minutes though, the shades are gone and you can see his eyes, brighter than ever as he smiles amicably

at Jane and Roxy. Your fingers twitch again, you want to take that smile off his face, it didn't suit him. Not to you. You know it's fake and you want to see a real smile on his face.

Or maybe a smirk, you know he smirks from time to time underneath the mask back on the chases. How could he not? You would.

...

Maybe Roxy was right, you're uncomfortably and maybe a *bit* unhealthily obsessed with him. Maybe. Just a bit.

But can you blame yourself?

Maybe, but you're not going to.

Because he's smiling and it feels *off*.

TT: Something's wrong.

TG: ????

TT: Something's up.

TG: ???????

TG: wym

An alert comes to you and Roxy.

You curse behind the glass while Roxy tenses and gapes.

Sebastian Strider was currently missing.

Fuck.

---

### P.o.V. Change (SS)

You silently crawl through the ventilating system, the smaller one. The one that no adult can go through. You could've gone through the bigger one, it was more comfortable and probably safer but, they would've expected that.

At least with this, you could give yourself time and an advantage as you try to find your brothers.

They've taken your bracelets away, and your shades, it was a shame, but you'd get them back. And if not, your big brother Hal would upgrade you a new one after you stole another person's bracelet, you have an extra pair of shades too. For now, you rely on your necklace instead. The one you hid in your sylladex. You don't wear your extra shades because they might grate against the metal walls around you as you crawled.

You smile to yourself when big brother Hal contacts, okay, you'll track him later. For now, you'll head for your bigger brother Qrow. He'd been hurt so he should be at their infirmary. You use your necklace and make your way to Qrow.

To your side, you can hear the muffled sound of people cursing, along with the familiar voice of the man that was supposed to look after you. Azdaja or something, he was funny, and had a cool looking headpiece that you wanted to steal- later, when you see him again. Right now you were on a mission to reunite with your big brothers and escape this place.

They really shouldn't have underestimated you.

---

## Chapter End Notes

WHOO!

There we go!

Now it's back to Stubborn Flocks!

I hope...

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!